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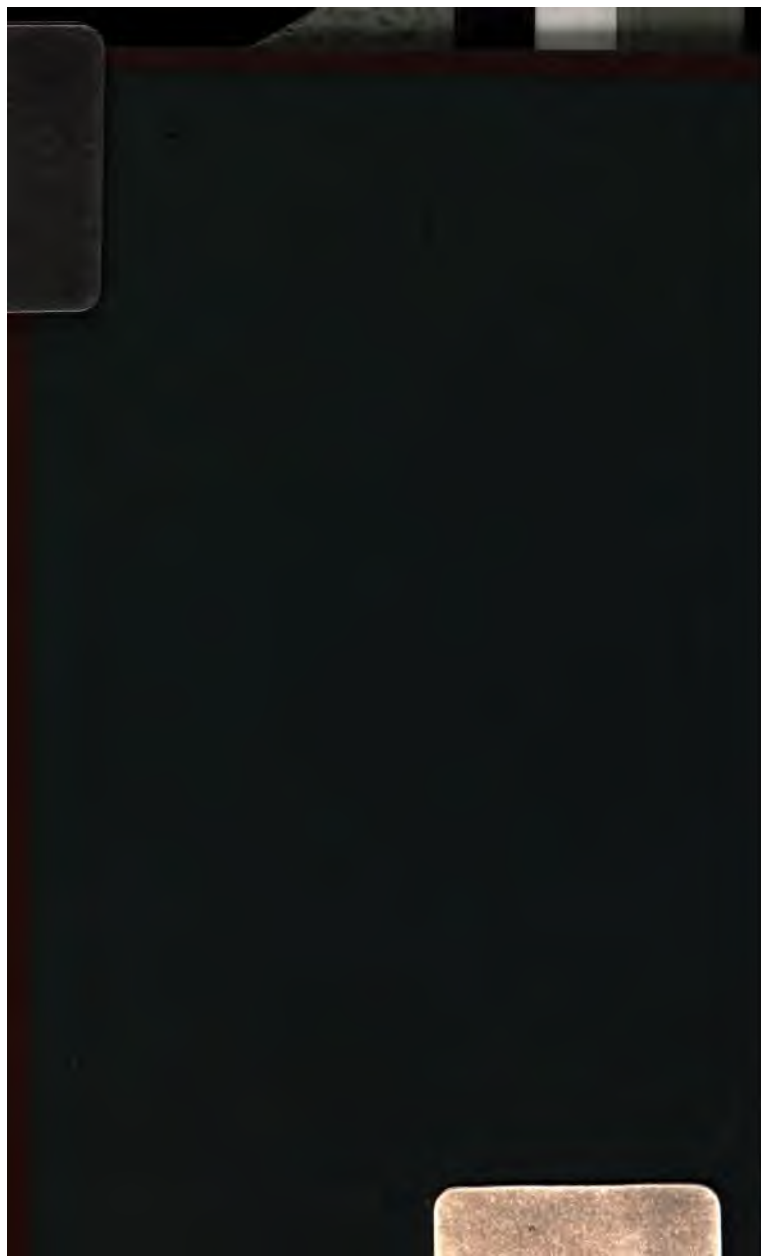
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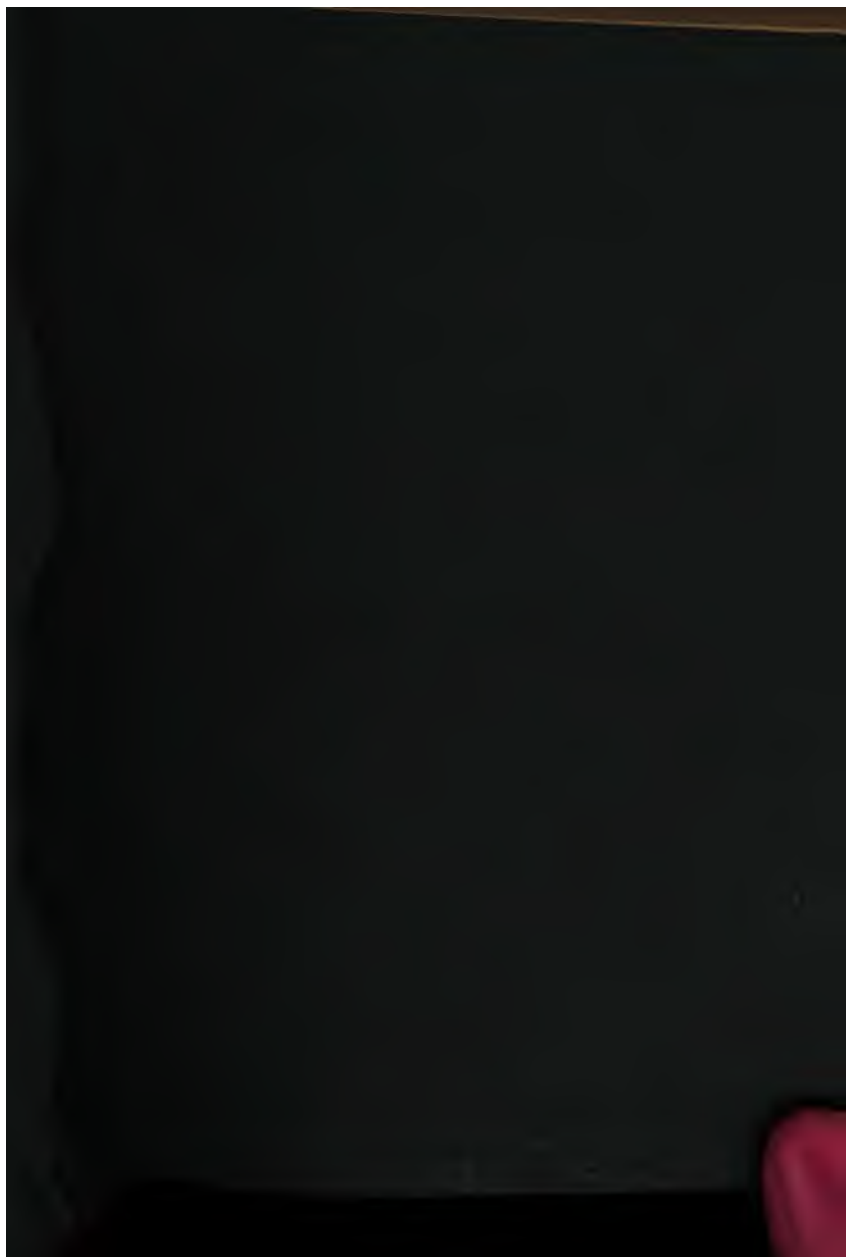
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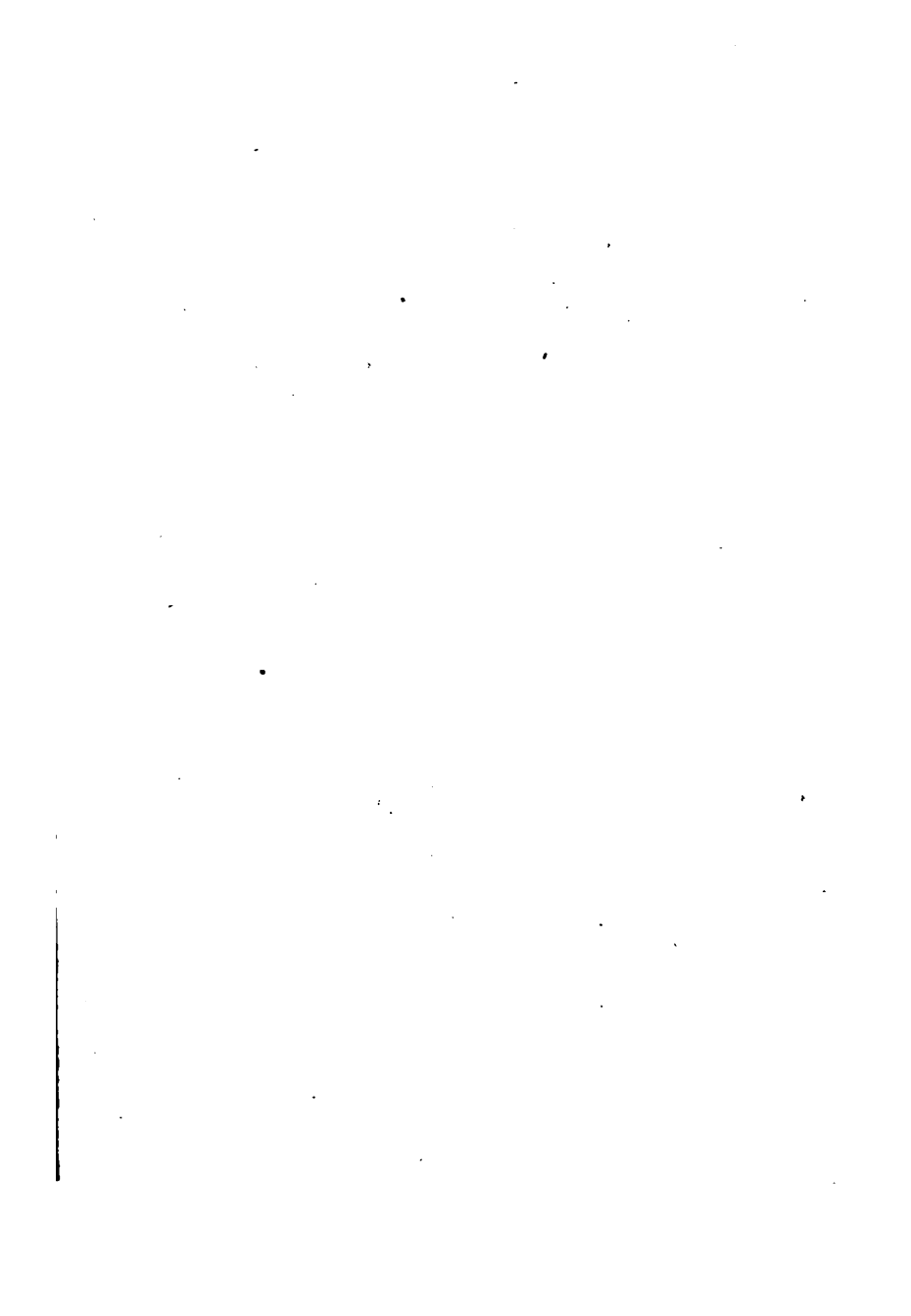
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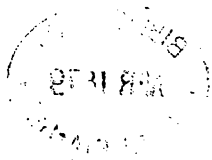
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BY LITTLE AND LITTLE.



BY LITTLE AND LITTLE,

AND OTHER SERMONS.

BY THE REV.

D. PARKER MORGAN, M.A.,

Vicar of Aberdovey.



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I.

BY LITTLE AND LITTLE.

“By little and little.”—*Deut.* vii. 22.

THE *rule* of heaven, earth, and hell!—
“By little and little.” Whether you look to the outward and visible, or to the inward and invisible; to the world of matter, or to the world of spirit; to the kingdom of nature, or the kingdom of grace; you will surely find this *rule* to hold good: “First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear,” or, to quote the words of my text, everything, *as a rule*, is done “by little and little.”

That you may the better realize the

truth of this assertion, I would point you for a few moments to the kingdom of nature.

Look at the history of yon giant oak! There is a little bird, and in his beak he bears a tiny acorn along! Away he wings his flight, o'er hedge and ditch, brier and brake, until, frightened by a hawk, he lets his little acorn fall in yon pasture field.

Oxen are grazing there. The ox comes by, and beneath his hoof the tiny acorn is trodden deep down into the soil. The ox passes on his way. The acorn remains, uncared-for and forgotten; but "by little and little" it bursts its shell; "by little and little" it takes root downwards, and bears fruit upwards; "by little and little" the tender twigs peep out amid the surrounding blades of grass; and thus slowly but surely it rises higher and higher, and grows broader and broader,

until at length a sturdy oak marks now
the spot where years before the little acorn
fell.

That tree, brethren, is a standing illustration of the principle that in nature things are done, as a rule, "by little and little."

Look where you will upon the face of nature, and the same thing stares you in the face.

So true is this fact that the poet has long since embodied the principle in song :—

"Slowly moves the march of ages ;
Slowly grows the forest king ;
Slowly all perfection cometh,
Every great and glorious thing."

Indeed, we may ask, What was it that gave to that first miracle at Cana its wondrous character? What but the fact that therein the Incarnate Son of God violated this rule of nature's God? The

water of which we there read might in the ordinary course of nature have become wine. It might have descended into the earth; from the earth it might have been absorbed into the roots of the vine, from the roots into the stem, from the stem into the branches, from the branches into the grape, and from the grape into the wine. And thus, "by little and little," the water might have become wine! But what saith the Son of God? Instead of allowing it thus *gradually* to be changed I will command that *at once* it be turned into wine! And "this," saith the Scripture, "was the first miracle that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee." Yes, it was a wonderful violation of the almost universal rule in nature—that everything should be done "by little and little."

My object, however, to-day, is to point you rather to the world of spirit than to that of nature.

The words of my text, you will observe, were spoken to the children of Israel; and according to the inspired warning, so it came to pass; it was, in truth, "by little and little" that these enemies were expelled from the Promised Land.

Now as Israel of old was a type of the true Israel under the gospel dispensation, and the land of Canaan a type of the heavenly home, so also were the enemies of Israel then a type of the enemies of the child of God now, and the manner in which those enemies were overcome was also a type of the way in which the enemies of God's people are to be "by little and little" brought under their feet.

This, beloved hearers, is what I would impress upon you then to-day, that just as the ancient Israelites were sure of the Promised Land as their inheritance *ultimately*, but still could not secure it without a struggle, or rather *a series of struggles!*

even "by little and little;" just so with the child of God, although from the moment that he believes in Jesus, as the only Saviour of his soul, he by that very act secures to himself the *right* to enter heaven; nevertheless his *meetness for heaven* is a work which will require years of stern struggling with his spiritual enemies.

In other words, we would remind our hearers that while *justification is the work of a moment, sanctification is the work of a lifetime*. We become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light only "by little and little." Now we are told in the first verse of this chapter that there were seven nations opposed to the Israelites of old, "greater and mightier than they." And are there not seven, yea, I may truly say, seventy times seven, nations of enemies opposed to the believer's onward march? And rest assured they are greater

and mightier than you. Mightier than *you*, remember, but not mightier than you and your God together.

Herein it is that the believer's strength doth rest.

In the preceding verses you will find that God gives His people this comfort : "If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I ; how can I dispossess them ? Thou shalt not be afraid of them . . . thou shalt not be affrighted at them : for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible." Then, methinks, the children of Israel might say, "If, indeed, Thou, O God, art among us and on our side, destroy, we pray Thee, these nations *at once* ; send out Thy destroying angel, as Thou didst in the land of Egypt, and in one night lay every enemy low !"

"Nay," saith the Lord, "for mine own name's sake, I *will* put out these nations

before thee; but, for wise and good reasons, I will *not* do so *at once*, but 'by little and little.'"

These reasons for not destroying those nations at once God gives in the following verses—reasons whose force you must admit.

Take one, and only one, in passing. What more sufficient reason could you ask than that put forth in the very verse of my text: "Thou mayest not consume them at once, *lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee*"?

And in like manner we may rest assured that the Master's reasons for not destroying our *spiritual* enemies *at once*, but enabling us to overcome by little and little, are both wise and all-sufficient.

That we cannot overcome these enemies at once will, I take it, be acknowledged to the full if I appeal to the experience of any Christian man or woman.

By "Christian man or woman," mark

you, I mean not the mere professor—I mean not one of those who “having the form of godliness,” still deny the power thereof.

No! my hearers, I mean none of those characters; but I mean those among you who do honestly and heartily strive to gain the mastery over your enemies, and are prayerfully struggling in the upward road to glory!

To *you*, true and tried soldiers of the Cross, I now appeal, and I ask whether this text does not paint your inner experience to the very life?

Do you not find, from the sorrowful past, that there are certain enemies haunting and harassing you continually, so that your life but too truly deserves the name of “warfare”?

Let me tell of one or two such enemies, that oppose and vex you by the way.

Have ye never been harassed by those

enemies of the Christian's peace, even by the nation of *worldly cares*?

This nation is compared by the Master to briars and thorns, which spring up, and unless the greatest and most constant care be taken will choke the good seed.

I know of none other nation, perhaps, more to be dreaded than these worldly cares, and this is especially the case in these days, when many causes, such as the great competition in trade, the high price of provisions, and an ever-increasing population, give to Satan a terrible vantage-ground wherefrom to attack.

What does the Evil One do? He sees the widow worshipping in church, with her little ones around; and as that loving one's eyes chance to light upon her babes, Satan whispers in her ear, "Yes! you may well look at them, for where are you to get food for them to-morrow?" These anxious cares he suggests, and *her prayer is spoiled.*

Or, perhaps, there is a man of business going up to the house of prayer.

See him there! his knees are bent; his hands are clasped in supplication.

Suddenly the Evil One comes and whispers in his ear some anxious thought as to whether this or that scheme will prosper; holds out, perhaps, before his eyes, a glorious future; or, perhaps, crushes him with the dread of impending ruin. This he does, and by doing it, mars the worship of that soul.

And is it not the case, beloved hearers, that these cares for earth and the things of earth will intrude themselves, despite all your prayerful resistance?

Ye have tried to shake them off once and for ever, as unworthy of the child of God, but they will not be shaken off *at once*. Still *strive on*, and the Lord thy God will put them out before you "by little and little."

Again, the true Israelite is worried by a nation of *idle and wandering thoughts*.

We are by nature vain in our imaginations, and these vain thoughts lodge even within the walls of Jerusalem!

“O Jerusalem,” saith the prophet Jeremiah, “wash thine heart from wickedness. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?”

Alas! these vain thoughts! Do you not find a nation of this sort swarming about your heart every day and every night? Yea, if I be not greatly mistaken, these enemies of your peace haunt you when walking by the way, and when lying awake on your pillow at night!

Am I wrong if I say that these vain thoughts have intruded themselves even within these sacred walls to-day?

When you were kneeling awhile ago and seeking to engage in prayer with your God, did not some wandering thought

enter your mind and spoil the power of that prayer? Yea, and remember, I am not alluding to those among you who are careless or indifferent, but to the earnest and devoted worshippers. Even *you*, my friends, I am sure, have been harassed thereby.

The truth, beloved, is simply this: the Evil One will not, if possible, be beaten. He will not yield an inch of your heart without fighting for it. And what does he therefore say?

“Ah, that man will not abstain from praying! I have tried to coax him to give it up, but I cannot prevail upon him yet. I know what to do. I will go with him to the house of prayer, and when he bends the knee and opens his heart I will put vain, wicked thoughts into that heart, and will try so to spoil that prayer.”

Now, beloved hearers, ye must not be discouraged at this state of things; ye

must not incline to despair because you are unable to be rid of these vain thoughts *at once*. Continue to strive against them, and, in the name of that God whose I am, and whom I serve, I promise that the Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee "by little and little." He may not, indeed, He *will* not, do so immediately and at once ; but He will most assuredly do so at last.

Thus might I enumerate enemy after enemy that will harass and impede us by the way. I might remind you of the sickening doubts and fears, of the lurking treachery of that poor heart, of the seducing friends and the too frail flesh. These cause you frequent and fearful pain, and ever and again break in upon your peace. Still in any moment of despair I would point you to the truths of the text, and entreat that you will not forget how that God has all wisely willed that we should

not conquer *at once*, not become perfect at once, but conquer one foe after another, and become perfect only "by little and little."

Thus much at this time for that bright and cheering side of the picture. I would that I needed not to show you the other, the darker side.

"By little and little" I have shown to be the rule of heaven. It is, alas! none the less truly *the rule of hell*. In the third chapter of Genesis we read that "the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field," and surely in nothing has that old serpent manifested his cunning more than in the cruel way wherewith he has imitated God in dealing with the souls of the children of men.

The thought has often crossed my mind that were the father of lies more straightforward in his dealings with fallen humanity then had many a victim broken the snare of the fowler, many a soul

escaped sorrow in time and in eternity. But, alas! this foul fiend would seem to say, "I see that in saving souls Jehovah takes not the sinner out of his sin so as *at once*, to transform him into a *perfect* saint. I see that in winning souls to glory He woos them *gradually* away from earth, and 'by little and little' makes them meet to be for ever with the Lord. I will go and do likewise. In seeking the eternal ruin of souls my principle of action shall be the same. I will not try to make a man a tenant meet for hell *at once*, but *step by step* I will lead him down. I will first coax him till he gives up some one good habit; I will then tempt him till he indulges in some one sin, and again I will blunt his conscience by tempting him to repeat that sin, until 'by little and little' I shall be able to sap the very foundations of his character, and gradually make him fit for the abode of the lost."

This, brethren, believe me, is the history of many a sad career. Look at that poor wretch as, half-drunken and with brazen face, she jauntily struts along the street! See her there, an object of scorn rather than of pity to the passer-by. Shall I tell you the tale of that life?

She was not always what you see her now. Scarce twenty years have passed away since she lay, an infant, on a doting mother's lap. Behold her there, young and innocent, guileless and guiltless; yes, pure as the driven snow on the hills of Wales. Years roll away. The infant becomes the girl, and the girl becomes the maid, and purity still reigns within that breast. But the time then came to quit that childhood's home, and *then*—yes, *then*—the first fatal steps were taken in that downward, sad career.

Not much wrong at first, just a little late at night; but "by little and little"

the gaudy trinket and the gay attire, the Sabbaths misspent and the reckless speech, betrayed the fatal falling, and to-night you see her there, an object of scorn to the many, yea, an object of scorn to herself.

Ye pure ones, ye happy ones, turn hither a pitying glance as ye pass her by. Hers was no sudden crime, hers no furious fall. The enemy caught her by stealth, and "by little and little" the deed was done.

To you then that hear me this day I now appeal, and I adjure you, as you value your happiness in time and in eternity, *beware of the very first little tendency to sin. It is here the danger lies.* This is the rule of hell's attack.

But now, in conclusion, I would turn once more to the brighter features of this text. I would, ere I close, speak once again some words of comfort to the Master's children here. To you I say

again, Be not discouraged if ye find that ye cannot get quit of every sin *at once*. Ye must ever bear in mind that, though *we* might wish to become perfect and pure *at once*, our God, whose ways are as high above our ways as heaven is high above the earth, has in infinite wisdom and in undoubted love decreed that we should only attain to that blissful state "by little and little."

And yet, again, ye need a word of warning here. Never let the child of God forget that while his heavenward progress may be slow, still "onward" must his motto be.

There must be no standing still in the race that is set before us. Though we gain but little ground, still let that little be gained.

And thus, "by little and little," one sin after another will be overcome, one virtue after another will be acquired, until at

length, being "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," we shall appear before God in Zion, and there realize the glorious fulfilment of the promise that "the Lord thy God shall put out these nations before thee by little and little."



II.

SOWING AND REAPING.

“Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.”—*St. John iv. 37.*

YOU must have observed that when our blessed Lord was here upon earth, He was ever and again accustomed to teach those who came to hear Him by means of *parables*.

Upon this occasion, however, we find Him introducing a *proverb*—a *λόγος*—an old traditional saying; and there is this peculiarity about the proverb in my text, that it is universally acknowledged to be one of *the oldest* proverbs in existence.

Nor can we wonder at the antiquity thereof, if you just call to mind the simple

fact that the very man who wrote the earliest books in the Bible was himself a striking illustration of the truth it contains.

I am thinking of Moses, that man of God. Often have I pictured to myself a little group of the children of Israel gathered together beneath the branches of the trees at Gilgal, that spot where first they pitched their tents after entering the Promised Land.

Methinks I could see them there, and hear them talking the one to the other over the past history of their race.

They call to mind the day when first Moses appeared upon the scene in Egypt ; they tell again how he delivered his people from the hand of the oppressor, how by the power of his God he brought them dry-shod through the depths of the Red Sea, and how that, step by step, month by month, and year by year, for well nigh

forty weary years, he led them backward and forward along that wilderness way, until at last he had brought them all but into the Promised Land—the long-looked-for land of Canaan; when suddenly the Lord appeared and bade him climb to the top of Pisgah. He bade him take a last, lingering look on that fair but for him too distant land, and *then*—lie down and die—yes, *die*, in that lonely spot of which the Bishop of Derry wrote,—

“And no man dug that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the ‘sons of God’ upturned the sod
And laid the dead man there.”

And now Joshua steps to the front. He assumes the command of the covenant host. The waters of the Jordan are parted before him, and *he* leads them triumphantly into the Promised Land!

“Alas!” methinks I hear one of the group exclaim; Alas! Moses it was who

had all the care! Moses it was who had all the toil! Moses it was who had to put up with our murmuring, our scorn, our insult, and contempt! And now, just when we thought there was coming an end to his care, just when we thought that at length he was about to reap the fruits of his years of toil, in that very moment Jehovah hath cut him down, and given the honour to Joshua! Alas! "one soweth, and another reapeth."

If then, beloved hearers, you find the truth of this proverb exemplified in that early period of the world's history, we cannot be surprised at its antiquity nor wonder at the familiar way in which the Master introduces it on this occasion.

"Herein," says our Lord, "is *that* saying true—that saying which you have probably heard quoted many a time; that saying which some of you perhaps know to be only too true; *that* saying, in truth, of

which you, my disciples, are at this moment living illustrations, for 'herein' *in you* 'is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth,' for 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.'"

Now, before we seek to draw from this text those further lessons which it fairly teaches, I would ask you to consider that question which must surely suggest itself to every thoughtful reader of this passage.

The question to which I refer is this : How could it be said of the disciples that in their case the saying was true, that "one soweth and another reapeth" ?

Who could those men have been of whom the Master saith, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : *other men* laboured, and ye are entered into their labours" ?

Men and brethren, am I not right

when I say that with most of us it is the case, that ever since those never-to-be-forgotten days when we learnt, as it were, the A B C of our religion at our mother's knee (and I often think of the millions who, under God, will owe their heaven to their mother's teaching)—am I not right, I repeat, when I maintain that we have been wont to believe that the great truths of redemption were never taught until these first great evangelists of the gospel went forth upon their mission ?

And yet, surely, the Master scatters any such ideas to the four winds of heaven when He says, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : *other men* laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

Who then, I ask again, could those men have been of whom the Master spake ? Why, beyond all doubt, He was thinking and speaking of Himself, of His fore-

runner St. John the Baptist, and of all the prophets and patriarchs of that old dispensation, every one of whom had been engaged in sowing the seed in the hearts of that people from whom the disciples were now going forth to reap the first-fruits of the Christian harvest !

And, according to that view, the 3000 souls who were converted upon that first great Christian Pentecostal morn were not—as many would believe—3000 people who *had never until that day* heard the great truths of a vicarious redemption.

On the contrary, they were a people who from the earliest days of childhood had been trained and educated in that law of which the apostle tells us that while it did *not* possess the *substance*, nevertheless it *did* “possess *the shadow*, of good things to come,” and was, in fact, “a schoolmaster” designed by God “to bring His people to Christ.”

Let it NEVER, I pray you, be forgotten that *in the law lay the germ of the Gospel!* Yes, in the law lay the germ of the Gospel!

Every type of that old dispensation was nothing else than a finger-post set up by God, and pointing on, along the ages as they rolled, to the fulness of time when God should send the Reality, the true Lamb of God, into the world, to take away the sins of that world!

So that, in truth, all that the Jewish nation required was that some Peter should step to the front, should explain the types, and apply them to the blessed Lamb of God, who was shortly to die on Calvary, or, in other words, all that this people needed was that the disciples should put in the sickle, for the fields of the Jewish nation were already white unto harvest!

If then the question be asked, "Who could those men have been of whom the

Master said, 'Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours'?' let the answer ever be ready. They were none other than the Master Himself, His forerunner St. John the Baptist, yea, and all the patriarchs and prophets of that old dispensation, all of whom had been sowing the seed where now the disciples were reaping the fruit.

Thus, beloved, I trust, I have shown that in the case of the disciples it was, indeed, true that "one soweth and another reapeth"!

Let us now, brethren, look at the words of my text and seek therefrom such lessons as may, with God's blessing, be for the good of our souls.

1. I would ask you then, in the first place, to take these words in their most literal interpretation, and mark how often and how sadly is that saying true, "One soweth, and another reapeth."

It may not have been your happy lot, as it was mine, to spend much of your days in an agricultural district—in the midst of sowing and reaping. But there, in my old parish, once and again have I seen some of my people go forth in the days of early spring. There you might have seen him, by the sweat of that honest brow, sowing the seed in the furrowed land! But ere that seed had sprung up and grown into golden grain, he that sowed it was slumbering beneath the churchyard's sod. It was *literally* true that "one soweth and another reapeth."

2. Again, if you take these words and *apply them to the life and experience of our men of business*, do you not find it, in their case, often and painfully true that "one soweth and another reapeth"? Surely it is no uncommon thing to hear of a man of business who for twenty, thirty, or forty years has "early risen and

late taken rest, and eaten the bread of carefulness." Through all those years you might have seen him day by day go forth at the wonted hour ; throughout the hours of the day you might have seen him hurrying to and fro in pursuit of business ; and again at eventide you might have seen him regularly returning to his family and home. One day, however, he returns more worried than usual with the cares of the day, and as he lays his hand on his throbbing brow, he tells to the partner of his life how that really the burden of business is now becoming more than he can bear, and how that the poor brain refuses the overstrained task. " But," he adds, while a bright smile breaks over his face, " God has been very kind to me. I feel that I can now afford to lay all these cares aside and retire into private life."

Oh ! what joy is felt in that home when these tidings are told to the children !

What castles are built in the air, in the prospect of having father at home all day, and every day! How does one, and another of that loving band picture the country village, the quiet parish church, and their happy, peaceful home hard by! Oh! bright and blissful future! But, alas! in the very hour of their triumph, in the midst of this too delightful dream, the Master comes, and calls the father away, and another steps in and reaps where he has sown! Oh! that the man of business, whose soul is well nigh cankered with his cares, would but remember in the midst of all his grasping, that though he may heap up riches, he cannot tell who shall gather them, that though he may rack his brain and ruin his health in sowing the seed of earthly glory, he cannot tell who shall reap the fruit thereof!

Men of the world, to you I appeal! I beseech you, as ye value your happiness

in eternity, never to forget that in the ways of business it is continually true that "one soweth and another reapeth."

3. There is, however, another and a terrible sense in which this saying is true!

Has it ever occurred to you, beloved, how that *in the punishment of sin in the life that now is* you find ever and again that "one soweth and another reapeth"?

Yes! whether you look to the word of God, or to the Prayer-book of your Church, or to the experience of the world around, you are met at every turn by this most awful fact.

Listen to the words of that second commandment, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Listen again to the words of the dear old Litany of our Church, "Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our

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forefathers." Yea, and I come down to your own experience in life, and I ask whether amid your own friends and acquaintance you have never known a case where this saying has been only too sadly true?

Have you never known an instance where a father has committed a crime, and his innocent lads have had in shame to reap the fruit of that crime?

Have you never known a case where a mother has gone wrong, and her guiltless girls have had with broken hearts to reap the fruit of that wrong?

My dear hearers, we would point the sinner to the cross, and to Him who hanged thereon, and we would ask how it is possible for him to continue in sin, in the face of that dying Saviour's love?

But, if that will not move him to repentance, we will come down and speak to him as a man. We would ask the father

that indulges to-day in sin to go home, and when his little bright-eyed lad climbs upon his knees and twines his tiny arms around his neck, let him ask himself how he can find it in his heart to go on in sin, when the word of God has warned him that hereafter, when he shall be dead, that innocent bairn may have to reap the fruits of that sin ?

Ye fathers and mothers, to you I make my appeal. Yes! I beseech you to ponder well this terrible truth, that in the punishment of sin here it is often true that "one soweth and another reapeth."

Look, I pray you, in the face of that innocent child, and as ye would spare him sorrow in years to come, give up at once, give up for ever, your sin !

4. But let us, in the last place, turn to a brighter application of my text. I would have you always bear in mind that as in the case of those first disciples of our

Lord, so must *it ever be with those who work for the Master here*, "One soweth, and another reapeth."

Sweet truth! so full of comfort and of cheer to those who bear the burden and heat of the day!

Why, brethren, what should we do were it not for this knowledge, even the assurance from the Master's own lips, that, for good and wise purposes, our Father has willed that in our work for Him below it will often, often be true that "one soweth and another reapeth"?

Were we to judge of the success of our labours by the visible results given us to see, where is the preacher whose heart would not incline to despair? Where is the Sunday-school teacher? where the district visitor? where the missionary? whose soul would not sink within them as they looked upon years of sowing, and *little*, yea, perhaps, *no* reaping at all?

Alas! it is no uncommon thing for some of our most earnest, most prayerful preachers to go on Sunday after Sunday sowing the seed, and still at the end of a dozen years not be able to lay their hand upon the head of a single soul, and say, "That soul is the fruit of my teaching"!

Where is the Sunday-school teacher that would not tell too often the same sad tale? Forth she goes through the burning sun of summer and the biting blasts of winter. There she sits her down with her little class, and time after time, month after month, yea, year after year, tells to them

"The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love,"

and still at the end of a dozen years may not be able to point to one single converted soul as the fruit of the seed which she had sown.

Were we, I repeat, to walk by sight, to judge of our success by the visible results,

our hearts would, nay, they must, assuredly yield to despair. But we must walk *by faith*, beloved ; we must call to mind the words of my text, and find untold comfort in the assurance that "one soweth and another reapeth."

I have myself found this saying so true in one particular case that for your comfort I would relate it now.

Some years ago it chanced that I was, with many others, engaged in a mission in the town of M——. On the Thursday night in that Mission week, when the old church was thronged with some 1,700 souls, suddenly, while all were listening in rapt silence, a wild, unearthly cry was heard from the western porch. He that uttered it was at once removed, but at the after-meeting, in the schoolroom hard by, he was brought to me as the man whose cry had so disturbed the service that night. There he stood before me, the beau-ideal

of our traditional British sailor, with his weather-beaten brow and old blue blouse.

“What was it, my friend,” I asked, “in my sermon that touched you so?”

Never, so long as memory holds her seat, can I forget the answer which that man gave.

“It was no great power in your sermon, sir,” was his reply; “but twenty-and-one years ago I ran away from my poor, pious mother’s home at Pembroke; for twenty-and-one years I never set foot on British soil, until last night we landed at M——. To-night I came up into the town. I saw a light in the window, I heard a voice in the church, and I thought I would just turn in and see what you were doing. As I came to the porch I heard you say,—

‘That wearisome head is at rest;
Its thinkings and achings are o’er;
That quiet, immovable breast
Is heaved with affliction no more.

‘Those eyes she so seldom could close,
By sorrow forbidden to sleep,
Sealed up in eternal repose,
Have strangely forgotten to weep.’

“And, sir,” said the man, while the big tears rolled down his cheeks, “when I heard you say those words I thought, ‘O God, those are the words my old mother used to sing,’ and *my heart was bowed at last.*”

Oh! wondrous tale! Twenty-and-one years before, that mother had sown in tears; twenty-and-one years after, I, the preacher, was reaping in joy. Surely it is true “that one soweth and another reapeth.”

Go on then, my friend, with thy sowing in faith and in love; and though thou mayest never here see the fruit thereof, still the Master will watch and water it, and in His own time cause some one to reap where thou hast sown.

One final thought, and I have done.

How good and gracious is that Master whom we serve! How kind and sympathizing in His dealings with the children of men! He knows our frame, and remembers how hard it would be for us, poor creatures of dust, to labour on and *never* share in the results, to sow the seed through a lifetime and *never* hear aught of the fruit! He has, therefore, in the verse preceding my text, given us the precious assurance that "both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall *rejoice together.*"

Thrice blessed words, "*Rejoice together!*"
Yes, "Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning."

Ye may not see the bud,
The first sweet sign of spring,
The first dull drops of the quickening shower
On the dry, *hard* ground that ring.
But the harvest home ye'll keep,
The summer of life ye'll share,
When they that sow and that they reap
Rejoice together there!



III.

THE FATHER AND HIS CHILD.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth we are dust.”—*Ps. ciii. 13, 14.*

THERE is, perhaps, no discouragement greater than that which arises from the conscious weakness of the flesh. This body is a snare and a trap, a clog and a weight, to every child of God. And not only is this weakness of the flesh a source in itself of trial to a man's own conscience, but it is made still more so from the unreasonable expectations or the uncharitable remarks of others. They ex-

pect more than frail man can do ; and if he fail in any moment of trial, they cry him down at once as a hypocrite, and his religion as a sham. Now this censoriousness, this finding fault on the part of the world, often prevents persons from making an open profession of Christianity, yea, and keeps back thousands from the Table of the Lord.

I wish, therefore, God helping me, to put this matter before you to-day, in the light of the testimony of the word of God. And from the pages of that holy book I remind you, one and all, that Christianity does not make any man perfect whilst he is in the flesh ; no, not even its most devoted followers. Correct they may be in their conduct, creditable in their character, and willing in their minds, yet "the flesh always warreth against the spirit, to bring us into subjection to the law of sin."

Brethren, mark me, I yield to none in

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my earnest call for a watchful life, an earnest endeavour to live a godly life, yet I must maintain that any one may fall through the infirmity of the flesh, through that sin which does so easily beset him, and yet be no hypocrite in his profession of sincere piety, no traitor to the cause he loves. This truth would not need enunciating if people took their opinions from the book of God, and not from the fancies of men; if they gathered their conclusions about God's people from their character in the word of God, and not from the false and ever-varying standard of the world. Why, when we look into our Bibles we scarcely find a single saint without some fall recorded in his character; and this fall, it seems to me, is recorded to unteach the very error which acts so fatally upon our brethren now. Look, for instance, at Abraham, pronounced by God to be His friend, and "the father of the faithful."

You find him, indeed, at one time called upon by his God to leave the Ur of the Chaldees, to quit the home of his childhood, and to set forth on a journey—whither he did not know. Still, in obedience to that command, and through faith in that God, he gave up all and went forth,—so great was his confidence toward God. Again, when bidden by God to take his son, his darling son, Isaac, and offer him up as a sacrifice unto the Lord, without one moment's murmuring he bids the young men saddle the ass. He sets forth, with his child; he comes to the place which the Lord revealed to him; he builds Him an altar; he lays the wood upon the altar; he binds the lad, and lays him upon the wood, and, with knife in hand, stands ready to strike the fatal blow, when Heaven, satisfied, checks the willing hand. All this did Abraham, so great was his faith in his God! And yet, remember, this is the very

man who at another time, in the land of Egypt, when he thought, if it were known that the beautiful woman travelling in his company was his wife, some evil might befall him, utters the quibbling falsehood, "She is my sister"! And in like manner you find a sad fall in the history of Lot, of David, of Solomon, and of Job.

And if you pass on to New Testament times, you find that even Peter may deny his Lord, Thomas may doubt his Lord, James and John may lack the spirit of their Lord, while Paul and Barnabas may contend even to separation. Surely these men were neither hypocrites in their profession, nor traitors to their cause; but, on the contrary, they were men upon whose heads the "Well done!" of Heaven has been pronounced long ago.

II. But let us now look at the character of God.

With man, as a rule, there is little pity

for the offender, especially for a religious offender. But my text saith, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." What a terrible thing it would be for the fallen one, who for a moment has forgotten his calling, if, when the world denounced him as a hypocrite, and his own brethren offered to pull the mote out of his eye, his Father, his hope, his *all*, were to confirm the sentence of the one, and to sanction the proceedings of the other! But no; instead of this, the Father says to the one, "Let him that is without sin first cast a stone at him," and to the other, "First take the beam out of thine own eye."

And if we look back upon the cases already quoted, we shall see this confirmed. You have scarcely a reproof recorded, though you have the sin, not because it was *not* a sin, but because it was the sin of *a child that feared*, and that fell under

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sudden temptation in the hour of his weakness, but arose again weeping the tears of a genuine repentance, yea, *and* because, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Who so thoughtfully as a kind father remembers the constitutional weakness of his child? The world looks at his work, and is utterly regardless of the strength he had to do it; but the father puts the one side by side with the other. The world judges of the act, and forgets the temptation; but the father knoweth his child's frame, and while he grieves over the sin, he remembers how easily that sin beset him. Oh, the force and beauty of this verse, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

III. But I would wish to set before you a few thoughts calculated to confirm this blessed truth.

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God knoweth our frame, *because He made it and fashioned it.* No one knows it as He knows it. We can only say with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," so wonderfully that there is much of it beyond our finding out. But God knows the why and the wherefore of the whole being. There is not a sinew in my system, nor a nerve in my nature, but He knows a reason for its being there. Yes, and He knows all about what is to us a dark, dark mystery—I mean the connection between the body and the soul.

How often have we endorsed that beautiful hymn,—

“ Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one goes wrong ;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long ” !

Yes, strange to us, but not to Him, for He made the harp and tuned its strings. Yea, “ He knows our frame.”

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Then, again, "He knoweth our frame," because *He Himself hath worn it*. O blessed truth! My God has worn my frame! Yes, and therefore the apostle says, "He was made like unto us in all things." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame ;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

And if you look around upon the face of nature, there too you will find how God has clearly shown that "He knows our frame." *Has He not adapted the world to this frame?*—to our powers of existence, and endurance; to our wants, and to our weakness? We are placed in a world far enough from the sun, so that we are not scorched in the summer; and near enough, that we be not frozen to death in the winter. We have enough rain to make

the grass to grow, and the rivers to flow, but not enough to drown us in its flood.

The whole world around us clearly proves that He who made the worlds knows our frame.

Look then, I say, to the fact that He has made this frame, that He has Himself worn this frame, and that He has clearly made the world to suit our frame. And then I ask, Who can doubt but that He knows our frame? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear Him." "He knoweth our frame!"

But the text contains another comfort. Not only doth He know our frame, but "*He remembereth.*" Ah, brethren, it is not so much because of our ignorance of ourselves and of each other that so much self-accusation and so much censoriousness is indulged in, but because we do not remember. We write bitter things against

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ourselves because we do not remember, and we speak bitter and unkind things of our brother and of our sister because we do not remember.

Who, I would ask, ever thinks to inquire into all the circumstances of a fault before it is condemned? And who is there that puts side by side with the offence the weakness of the offender? No, no, it is not because we know so little, but because we are not careful to remember what we do know. Not so our God! not so our merciful Saviour. He knoweth! "He remembereth that we are dust," and He pitieth, not because He knows, but because He remembers what He knows.

Beloved hearers, I would now turn this important lesson to account. We have just entered on the first Sunday in another year. And this first Sunday in a new year is often the time for new resolutions, new vows of reformation, new habits

of prayer, and of a new mode of life altogether. But in making such resolves, the very evil of which I have spoken is that which has prevented your going further, and acting with more determination. Perhaps you feel in your heart, "I *would* join God's people. I *would* this year go forward to the Table of the Lord! But what if some fault should overtake me? what if I should trip? what if I should thus have to face the taunt and the jeer? And—what is far worse—what if I should expose the Master's cause to shame?" On, I pray you. Be not discouraged! Consider what my subject teaches you, and take with you from this church to-day this glorious truth—a truth which before, perhaps, you have never realized—this truth, that man is censorious, always ready to find fault, but *you have to deal with a greater than man*. Man cannot soothe an accusing conscience! man cannot give you a happy

dying-bed! and above all, man will not judge, man will not condemn or acquit. "I hold the keys of death and of hell." "I shut, and none can open, and open, and none can shut." And this "I" is not man, be he saint or sinner. No, it is Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God. It is His censure you have to fear, and none other. And what does this dear One say? He tells you that He does not expect you to go all wisely, with no wandering, all straight, with no stumbling. If so, there would be no need for "pity." But He doth pity. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. He knoweth our frame; He remembereth we are dust."

My dear friend, have you hitherto kept back from an open confession of Jesu's name? Seize the proffered hand of "pity" now! and, leaning on this arm of pity, and listening to this voice of pity, and looking

up into that face of pity, make a fresh start toward heaven to-day. I know how you feel. But hush. Let me tell you something better far. God knows how you feel. He knows that you have sickening fears lest the resolves of the present should be broken, as were the resolves of the past! Dear friend, dismiss that dread with this thought, that if you have failed, you have not hopelessly failed, and that if He has permitted you to fall, like his disciple Peter, that you may discover your own weakness, He will next time permit you to conquer, that you may discover His strength! Take this text with you as your motto for the passing year. Take it with you into your sorrows. It will justify your tears. Take it with you when in some moment of despondency you feel it hard to be forgiven, and uncertain of acceptance! Oh, how can you doubt where there is pity, yea, where there is a Father's pity? Can

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you hesitate when He tells you that He knows your frame, He remembereth you are dust? Read for yourself, in the quiet of your closet, the words of this wonderful psalm; and may they comfort you as they have comforted me! Oh! that we could grasp its truths as the poet grasped them when he wrote,—

“ It is God. His love *seems* mighty,
And *is* mightier than it seems ;
'Tis our Father and His fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.

“ There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea,
And a kindness in His justice
That is more than liberty.

“ There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven ;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

“ For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind ! ”



IV.

IN THE WORLD, YET SEPARATE.

“I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”—*St. John xvii. 15.*

THIS prayer of our Lord is one of the pet spots in the Bible. Three circumstances make it deeply interesting. It was offered up on the occasion of His first communion with His disciples, and it shows the wish of His loving heart concerning those that had just joined in it that they might be preserved from everything that would dishonour His name, and disgrace their profession. This prayer too, was presented in the immediate

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prospect of death, and it is a solemn consignment of them into the hands of His Father, that He might guide them through this evil world, until they should meet Him in the unclouded glory of their Father's house, where—

“No clouds those blissful regions know,
For ever bright and fair,
For sin, the source of mortal woe,
Can never enter there.”

But, brethren, there is one thing which brings it home still more to us, and that is the fact that we who live in the world to-day have our share in this sweet prayer. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which *shall* believe in me through their word.” This prayer was prayed for us as much as for that little band which gathered then around that first communion table. Now in dealing with this text to-day, I wish, in the first place, to consider

what Jesus did *not* pray for, and (2), what He did pray for.

I. You must observe that Jesus did *not* pray that God would take His people out of the world; *i.e.*, of course, immediately. He might have asked that the door of faith should at once be the gate of heaven, and that the prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom," should be answered in every case, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

And, indeed, brethren, when we see a soul converted unto God, when we find a sinner turned into a saint, the thought will sometimes strike us, "Would it not be wise to take that soul at once to heaven? Would it not be better to take the tender young plant out of the chilling atmosphere of sin and transplant it at once to that happy land, where it would blossom and bloom in God's sunshine for ever?"

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“No,” says the Master, “no; I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.”

When the poor man of old had the devils cast out of him, he cried unto Jesus, “Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.”

“Nay,” said Jesus. “Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee.” Many a newly awakened sinner would gladly depart and be with Christ, which he thinks would be far better, but the Master says it must not be so. Such a soul would wish to wear the crown without carrying the cross, would wish to win the prize without running the race, would wish to conquer without the fight, but this must not be so. “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world.”

Now there are two senses in which this prayer may be, and in which it has been,

understood. Either He prays not that His Father should *take them out of society* and cause them to live apart in lonely solitude, or else that they *should be removed by death*.

(a). First, as regards this retirement from the world. Many men of old thought, and even in our age there are those who still think, that if we were to shut ourselves out from the world and live alone we should then be more devoted to God, and should be able to serve Him better. Many poor souls lived and died in deserts, far away from the haunts of men, spending their life in prayer, amid caverns and forests; and thought they were contaminated if once they mingled with mankind. There are certain orders of monks and nuns who live almost quite alone and fancy that by their seclusion they are bringing glory to God, and winning salvation to themselves.

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Brethren, I am not here to expose the rottenness of the monastic system ; but this I must say, and do say, that living alone is not the way to serve God. It may be the way to serve self! It cannot, I solemnly repeat, be the way to serve God truly. Suppose that you retire out of the world ; then, even if you can obey the first and great commandment—to love God—you certainly cannot perform the second—to “love thy neighbour as thyself.” Why, if we shut up ourselves like this we cannot possibly bind up the broken heart. We cannot bring the wanderer back and win souls, immortal souls, to Christ. No! Oh, no! Our Master would not have us retire “out of the world.” “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.”

(*b*). But this passage may be understood in a second sense : “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world ” *by*

death! Oh, what a lovely aspect in which to look on death! Most people shudder at the sight of a coffin, and grow pale at the approach of death. Well, the worldling, the man who has no hopes beyond the grave, may rightly tremble before the king of terrors and shudder at the thought of death. But if we are God's children, then we surely need not quake at the thought of removal to that other world, for we believe that which we sing,—

“Why should we mourn departing friends,
Or shake at death's alarms?
'Tis but the voice that Jesus sends
To call us to His arms!”

Death is merely the messenger whom God doth send to take His children “out of the world,” that where He is, there they may be also. Oh, it is very delightful to think of going home to Jesus, to God! Still we must *not go just yet*. Christ leaves it to His Father's will, and would

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have us wait until, like shocks of corn fully ripe, we shall each of us be gathered into the garner above.

Our blessed Lord did not pray for our immediate removal out of the world, but He did pray that our heavenly Father would "keep us from the evil."

This was not the first time for Him to offer this same petition. In that pattern prayer He has taught us to say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Now to be in the world and kept from the evil means, in fact, to be exposed to its temptations, but preserved from falling into sin. As long as we remain in the world temptations and sin beset us on every hand—the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. And there is the corruption still in this poor heart, though touched by the Spirit of God.

It is Christians who are commanded, "Be watchful ; be vigilant. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

God has not seen fit to deprive sin of its attractions, nor to disarm our great enemy of his fiery darts, nor to quench once and for ever the sinful materials in our hearts. That would be fighting the battle and winning the victory without us, and there would be no perfected purity, no established character, no conqueror's crown.

This, then, is the Master's prayer, that His Father would keep His people "from the evil." And here at once we must be clear as to what we mean by being "kept from the evil." It is not, my friends, to be preserved from sorrow or sickness, from reproach or bereavement, *but from sin.* While others may fix their thoughts on the stream, and try to filter a portion of the current here and there, the Christian

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must go at once to the Fountain Head and press home this prayer : "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Other men may have their own motives for avoiding wicked words and wicked deeds (regard to character, or health, or advantage), but we must strive to find higher reasons. "How can I do this wickedness and sin against God?"

II. And now, my dear hearers, let me ask why did Jesus pray *not* that they should be taken out of the world ?

I. Ah! He surely asked this *for the sake of the world*. Were Christ to remove men to heaven so soon as they had become His followers, He would be taking away from the world those who were meant to be its greatest blessing. True Christians are the salt of the earth ; distributed here and there, spread over its surface far and wide, they help to preserve it from the utter corruption to which it would otherwise sink. What would become of the mighty

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oceans of earth were God to remove the salt therein? Why, they would become putrid. They would deal out death and destruction to all around. Yes, and I ask, What would become of the world if the spiritual salt were removed by God? Ah, the miry clay would soon become more miry still, and society in all its parts would become rotten to the core. Why, surely, if the new-born child of God were to be taken at once out of the world, then, sirs, would this poor earth be a quarry, from which stones are taken, as from heathen Tyre of old, and transplanted as soon as cut to build the house of God in another land. But this is not to be the case! God wishes that here in the world a temple shall rise to His glory, growing from age to age, until before its altars all nations shall do Him service, and then shall the headstone be brought forth with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto it!" Yea, my fellow-

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soldiers of the cross, if we will do our duty, then, remember, we have a mighty work to do in the world and for the world! Yes, there are brands to be snatched from the burning, hearts to be soothed in their sorrow. So long therefore as there is one sinner unsaved, one sorrowing soul un comforted, so long must we be willing, ay, and glad, to stay in the world, and try to win these rebel souls to Christ.

2. Again, our Lord, methinks, prayed not that they should be taken out of the world because their remaining here would be more *for God's glory*. A tried saint brings more glory to God than an untried one. It has been well said that a believer in prison reflects more glory on his Master than a believer in paradise; that the child of God in the fiery furnace, with his hair unscorched, and upon whom the smell of the fire has not passed, displays the power and glory of God more than he who stands

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in heaven, with his crown of gold upon his head. There is glory that accrues to the name of Christ, and there is joy in the angel ranks in heaven, when first the sinner bends his knee and cries for mercy there. There is glory, too, that comes to Him when His redeemed ones are brought home, and when, arrayed in the beauties of holiness, they cast their crowns before Him. But it is for His glory, too, that there should be an interval between, a period of struggling, where the power of His grace may be seen in saving His child in the hour of his greatest need.

Thus then have I shown that it is expedient that God's children should not be taken out of the world, and for God's sake. And, lastly,—

They must not be taken out of the world *for their own sake.*

"Master," said Peter, "it is good for us to be here," when a ray of heaven's glory

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shone upon Him on the mount; "let us build here three tabernacles," as though he had said, "Why go down again into the dark world of temptation and of trial? Why not stay here and enjoy the heavenly vision at once?" "But," saith the Scriptures, "he wist not what he said;" and his Master bade him descend again from that glorious spot and travel many a weary step before he reached that higher mount, where he stands with his Lord in glory now.

My dear hearers, let us not blame Peter for this. Are there not times in our history when we too have felt that it would be better to be carried at once beyond the reach of the tempter, and to enter at once into rest? But a little stay on earth will make heaven all the sweeter. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil; nothing makes security so happy as a long exposure to alarms. No heaven will be so sweet as that which has been preceded by sorrows.

The more the trial, the greater the triumph; the more the suffering, the sweeter the salvation. Why, it will add to our themes of rejoicing in heaven to be able to tell of trials here and the wonders that grace hath done.

To you then, my friends, who, with myself, often think of, and talk of, yes, and long for, "the home over there"—to you I solemnly say, Do you feel that God's purpose is answered in not taking you out of the world? I ask you, Is the world any the better for your presence? Have you done, are you doing, anything to win poor souls to Jesus? Have you ever taken a poor erring one by the hand and given a soul a lift toward heaven? Oh, I fear there are many so-called Christians left in the world, and if they were taken out of the world to-night no soul on earth would miss them. Wretched caricatures of Him whose name they bear!

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Brethren, fellow-Christians, let us not be of their number. Rather let us all with heart and voice send up to heaven this prayer to-day :—

Father, while there is any good that I can do here take me not out of the world ; but this I ask, and only this : So long as I shall remain in the world, do Thou, for Jesu's sake, keep me from the evil. Amen.



V.

THE DAYSMAN.

“Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.”—*Job* ix. 33.

Or,

“Oh, that there were a daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.”

I SCARCELY think the term “*daysman*” can be familiar to many, if indeed to any of you. Apart from the passage before us this morning, I myself have never met with this word, except *once in an old history of Wales*. In the passage to which I refer, the writer was engaged in explaining some of the ancient customs, and now almost unheard-of terms, once in common use among the Welsh peasantry. Among other

points, he mentioned a person who, on the score of his office, was named a "daysman," which term he explained thus:—

"When a difference," said the writer, "arose between any two individuals, or any two clans, in order if possible to prevent bloodshed, it was customary that both the contending parties should choose them out *a mutual friend*, in whom both could trust, and in whose justice they could confide. The person thus chosen would forthwith proclaim in the ears of all men that on a *certain day*, and in a certain place, he would hear both sides, and having heard, use his best endeavour so to arrange matters that peace and unity might be restored, and those who before were enemies might again be made friends."

In order to this, he had, as I have told you, to *appoint a day* for hearing the case, and it was from the fact of his having to appoint *a day*, that he was familiarly styled

a "*daysman*." In the margin of your Bible you will find the term "*umpire*" suggested in lieu of "*daysman*;" but I think we cannot do better than compare this passage with a passage in S. Paul's writings. "There is," he says, "*one God, and one Mediator* between God and man." The same term,—*μεσίτης*,—is used in the *Septuagint version* of my text to signify "*a paysman*," as is used by S. Paul to signify a "*Mediator*."

So that, methinks, you will fully understand now the cry of Job, when his bursting heart found vent in the words of my text, "*Oh, that there were a daysman betwixt us, that he might lay his hand upon us both.*"

My object this morning is, by God's help, to convince, not only the head, but also the heart, of every hearer present, of the absolute necessity of a "*daysman*," or "*Mediator*" between God and man; one that "*might lay his hand upon us both.*"

It would seem from the 30th verse that the afflicted patriarch had already striven to justify and make himself acceptable before God, but all in vain. "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me."

"If I wash myself with snow water."

It is not to be wondered at if even a mistaken efficacy should be ascribed to snow, in the land where Job was born, and wherein he dwelt; inasmuch as the snow there, if ever it fell at all, must certainly have fallen very rarely, and even then, only upon the heights of the lofty hills. When we picture to ourselves the fleecy snow, as it glimmered and shone in all the brightness of the rising sun, we can fully realize the patriarch's suggestion of washing himself in snow water, as the means of attaining to the greatest purity possible *of himself*.

Certain it is, too, that *snow water*, like water obtained from the atmosphere in any other form, does not possess that hardness which is generally to be met with in spring water.

Anyhow, we have here an expedient suggested for making the hands clean, and the man pure and acceptable in the sight of God, a method *within the reach of man*, and which *man* can perform; a method, too, which is *quite effectual for beautifying all that meets the discernment of the outward eye*, and which is here proposed as the means of satisfying the eye of that God with whom we have to do.

This is what we understand to be represented by washing with snow water! It comprehends and embraces all that man can do for washing himself, and making himself clean in the sight of God.

Alas! in the next verse Job declares how vain his endeavours had been—"yet Thou

shalt plunge me in the ditch"—yet shall I be as filthy as though Thou hadst plunged me into the ditch beside the way ; yea, so filthy that mine own clothes even would abhor me, would shrink from contact with such a loathsome mass of putrefying sores and uncleanness.

Outward cleanliness will never satisfy that God who requires *truth in the inward parts*. God is the Father of spirits ; and the willing obedience of the spirit is that which He requires of us. "My son, give Me thy heart," and if the heart be withheld, then God says of all besides, "*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?*" The heart, indeed, is the demand : and surely He has a right, full and undisputed, to the heart of every child of man. Why should He be satisfied with the hand and head, without the heart ? Would any present among you count it enough that you had such a service, such

an obedience rendered to you, by one of your children? Would you be satisfied with the obedience of the hand, while you knew that the affections of your child's heart were totally away from you? Let every single command from the father's lips be rigidly obeyed, and fulfilled to the letter, would not the alienated heart, betrayed by the sullen countenance, turn it all into bitterness? It is the *heart* of his child the parent longs for, nor will any act be pleasing until the heart be given!

Even so with God. You may wash and make clean the outside, but if within there be all uncleanness and dead men's bones, then in vain will ye seek to make yourselves acceptable in the eyes of Him who asks, who demands, yea and who will have, the *heart*, or nothing at all.

Now when the patriarch had had recourse, and that in vain, to the highest of human means of presenting himself pure

before God, he seems suddenly to have lighted upon the true reason of his failure. He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. "Oh, said he, "that there were a daysman betwixt us—a mediator, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Not only to the people of every Christian country, but even to the rudest heathen idolater, *the necessity of a mediator* between God and man is found to be familiar. In all climes, and among all nations, sacrifices are offered to propitiate the Deity, and to cause him to look with favour upon those who offer them at his feet. Let the sinner but think of his God, as He stands forth in all the fierceness of His wrath. Let him view Him as a consuming fire; as a Judge that meteth out His justice by line and plummet. In these views, where can be found the man that would dare to meet his

God face to face—without a friend—without a “daysman” to go between?

“No man can see God and live!” The sight of the unveiled majesty of the Eternal Godhead would be more than mortal eye could bear. The countenance of Moses, when he had met his God upon the mount, shone so, that the children of Israel could not gaze upon him, till he had veiled the brightness of his face. Even so, the sinner could never gaze upon his God, until in mercy that God veiled His glory beneath the form of humanity—and then, as God *incarnate*, we beheld the *daysman* of Job,—the Mediator of S. Paul —“In whom we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Now, let us briefly consider a few of the reasons of the necessity of a daysman, that might lay his hand upon us both. One high enough to speak with God, the King

of heaven ; and at the same time lowly enough to lay his hand upon man, to dwell with this worm of earth.

In the first place, it was necessary to have a Mediator, *in order to prove to man the real feelings entertained by God towards the sinner.*

When man had first broken the commandment of Heaven, and so offended his God by sinning against Him, there were not wanting clear evidences of God being wroth against the ungodly "every day." And many is the time, and many the form, wherein that wrath has been manifested against all sin and ungodliness of men.

What was well-nigh the *first* act of their offended Maker, after that our parents had sinned in Eden ? Why, He drove them out of the garden, and placed behind them cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Pass on, and soon will you

see the windows of heaven opened, the fountains of the great deep thrown open wide, and the rolling floods sweeping the rebel thousands from off the face of nature. Follow on, and behold the fire and brimstone, rained down from heaven upon the ungodly cities of the plain. A little further, and the earth opened her jaws, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram alive into the pit.

Think upon Achan and the stolen treasure ! Think upon Absalom and his untimely death ! Call to mind the sin of David, and the sword that never departed from his house. All these judgments were sent to evidence the wrath of God against sin.

What wonder then if, in the face of such evidences of wrath and vengeance, Job should be heard to cry, " If I be ungodly, woe is me ! "

With such clear proofs of Heaven's anger

burning, is it not natural that man should conclude that He who dwelleth in the heavens is a God of vengeance, one who visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him? Yea, and in order to prove to man how that in truth his God was, despite all these fierce evidences of anger, after all a *God of love*—to prove this, I repeat, it was necessary to send “a daysman,” “a Mediator,” “that might lay his hand upon us both.”

That God loved man, although a sinner, was evidently hinted at by the prophets. One passage especially must strike you as setting forth this loving view of His character. “Yea,” saith Jeremiah, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” What! “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him

still : therefore am I troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

With these words still ringing in my ears, "since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still," I can almost picture my God, clear and distinct before my eyes. Is not our God here like as is many an earthly parent with a rebel, prodigal child ? The parent corrects; chastens, yea, and turns the rebel out of his doors, and drives him forth from his threshold ; but when he has expelled his child, and when the rebel is gone out of his sight, is that parent happy ? Can that parent sit down beside the fire, or lie down to rest, with a calm untroubled mind ? No ! no ! The parent is the parent still, and though the rebel may have oftentimes pained and racked that parent's heart, yet his parent loves him still, and would gladly see him back again. "Since the time I

spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Many a David has cried for a rebel Absalom, for one who has caused much sorrow, who has brought disgrace upon those who should have been near and dear to him. But in spite of all the shame, and all the pain, *the son was the son still*. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Such, my friends, in truth were the feelings of God to the sinner. What are sinners but so many spiritual Absaloms, ay, and Absaloms of deeper dye than he who found a rebel's grave in the wood of Ephraim? But how should God show His love? how should He *prove* His love to those who only believed in His judgments? Why—"by this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." "God so loved

the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Thus, then, it was *necessary* to have a *daysman* or Mediator—in order to prove to man the real feelings entertained by God towards the sinner.

Again,—and we will not linger long here,—a "daysman" or "Mediator" was necessary in order to exhibit to the full the character of God.

I need not remind you that we do not judge of a man's character by his natural abilities, but rather by his moral conduct. Our idea of character implies that the *heart*, rather than anything else, is involved. We judge not of a person's character by the strength of his arm, nor by the force of his mental powers, but we judge him rather by the use which he makes of this strength of arm and force of genius. If he use his talents to devise good, and his

arm to carry that good into effect, then we pronounce him *good*; but if, on the contrary, he uses these powers to plan and perform that which is evil, then is he numbered with the wicked. Even so with God. We cannot judge of His character by the signs of His mighty arm as exhibited in nature.

If ye would see the workings of God's heart in all their fulness and beauty, ye must go beyond the confines of nature.

Two points in the character of our God had of necessity to be brought out, and clearly proved : (a) *His hatred to sin.* (b) *His love to the sinner.* Had either of these two features alone been exhibited, and the other left concealed, then must the result have been fatal to the salvation of sinners.

For instance, had it only been shown that God hated sin with a righteous hatred, that He was of purer eyes than to behold

iniquity, that an impassable gulf stretched between Him and sin—were this the case, I say, why, we should all have been like Cain of yore—we should have fled from the presence of the Lord, with the agonizing cry, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.”

Reverse the picture, and let nought be proved but the love of God to sinners. What would in all probability be the result? Why, the sinner would hug his iniquity: he would continue in sin that grace might abound. He would ever have this consoling thought: “Ah! my God will not slay me, because His love to sinners is so great.” Thus, again, would the result be fatal.

But God, in His wisdom, has exhibited both His *hatred to sin*, and *His love to the sinner*. And what is the result fairly to be expected? Why, that these two views of His character will act upon the sinner

as do those two great laws act upon the works of nature, the great laws of the centrifugal and centripetal force. By the force of this centrifugal law, nature is prevented from rushing all into one mass at the centre. While the centripetal force, or as it is commonly called, "the law of gravitation," prevents the earth and all the other planets from flying away unrestrained into the boundless immensity of space.

Now where shall we find these two laws in God's character evidenced? Beyond all doubt or disputation, in the death, in the cross and passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament. Look at Jesus as He hangs upon the cross. Listen to His dying cry. See the sun veiled in shame: hear the rocks rending: yea, all nature seems to share the agony of man's Redeemer.

Listen, I say, and look! and in the face of that sight, and within the sound of that

dying cry, who can deny that *God hates sin*—hates it so fiercely that nought can wash away its leprous stain, but the blood of Jesus shed upon Calvary? And who will deny that *He loved the sinner*, when He gave His only begotten Son to die, in order to redeem the sinner to God?

Thus it was necessary to have a Mediator, in order to exhibit the true character of God. Beloved, have ye ever felt the burden of your sin? Have you ever shared the Psalmist's feelings: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"? If you have not, then may the Lord have mercy upon you, and cause you to feel. For till then, until, like Job, you abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, you will never cry with Job, "Oh, that there were a daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Remember! meet your God you *must* and *will*, but woe to you if you have not the

Mediator to go between—to stand in the gap and shield you from destruction, the “daysman” to lay his hand upon you both.

Where, oh where, will you meet your God, the consuming fire, if ye will not meet Him in the arms of Jesus? Will you dare meet Him amid the thunder and lightning of Sinai, and the terrors of Sinai’s law? Wherewith will ye come before the Lord, and bow yourselves before the high God? Will you come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord, think you, be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Will you give your firstborn for your transgression, the fruit of your body, for the sin of your soul? No! no!

“ Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.”

“ Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone ;
Christ must save, and Christ alone.”

Come to Christ, my friends. Hide your heads in the Daysman's riven side ; wash yourselves in His flowing blood, for, beside Him,—the Daysman of Job, the Mediator of Paul,—yea, beside Jesus, “ there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”



VI.

GIVING AND RECEIVING.

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
—*Acts xx. 35.*

IF you turn to the Gospel written by S. John, you will find that it closes with this remarkable verse—“There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”

Now, we are apt to regret that so many precious sayings and doings of our Lord should have been lost to the Church. But

you may rest assured that the Lord knew best what and how much to give to us; and this is the point, therefore, which I would have you notice, that of all those other words of our Saviour unrecorded in the Gospels, one, and one only, has been preserved for us by the Spirit of God; and that one, sirs, is the saying of my text, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

This fact alone, I think, should make us note the saying all the more.

It is also quite clear that the Apostle Paul valued this sentiment in the highest degree, as may be inferred from his closing with it his solemn farewell address to the Ephesian elders: "I have showed you all things; how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Men and brethren, read those words

again and again! There they stand, as true as the Gospel, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Shall I tell you, sirs, what rose to my lips when I first thoughtfully read this passage? "Ah! what a mercy that it was the Lord Jesus who said so! had any one else said it, the people would have laughed the idea to scorn."

Indeed it was well for the Apostle that his whole ministerial life had been a living illustration of this truth. For so contrary is this saying to the spirit of mankind at large, that his hearers would undoubtedly be inclined to rejoin, "Very well for him to say so; but does he believe it himself?"

Yes, brethren, S. Paul did believe it; so much so that in this very chapter he declares, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered

unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

Now, brethren, I wish this morning to do what I dislike above measure, but what is, I believe, a necessity from time to time; viz., to lay before our people, not the duty—be clear here—*not the duty*, I repeat, but *the absolute privilege of giving!*

May that same Spirit who saved this saying from oblivion, help me this day so to illustrate and apply the text, as best to promote the glory of God, and to extend the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. I will, then, in the first place maintain that it is more blessed to give than to receive, because to do so is *more like God*.

Oh, think of God's dealings with man from the day when first He gave Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul!

From Eden until to-day He has ever been a *giving* God. "He giveth to the

beast his food, and to the young ravens when they cry." He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. "He giveth us all things richly to enjoy." He is the Giver of "every good and perfect gift."

Yea, behold Him giving Himself to us in an everlasting covenant, steadfast and sure. "I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to Me a people."

But more precious far than all, pre-eminent above all His other gifts, behold Him, when a guilty world was ready to drop into hell, giving His only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

He has given us life; He has given us food and raiment; He has given us health and happy homes; yea, He has given His only Son to die for us!

In truth, brethren, let me ask you, what has He not given us?

“ For peaceful homes and healthful days ;
For all the blessings earth displays ;
We owe Thee thankfulness and praise,
Giver of all !

It is, then, I say, more blessed to give than to receive, because it is more like God to do so.

II. Again, it is more blessed to give than to receive, because to do so is *more Christ-like*.

Oh, where shall I begin, where shall I end, in speaking of the giving of Christ! In this, His whole life upon earth was like the sun in the heavens, giving warmth and happiness to all around! Of Him it was said, that He “ went about doing good.” On His way to do one act of kindness, He performs another. On His way to the house of Jairus, for example, He heals the woman having an issue of blood, and then pursues His way to wake the youthful dead.

He was, indeed, ever giving—but after a

new and strange fashion. Here it is. "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the sins of the world;" "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest;" "My peace I give unto you;" "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." Yes, and still from heaven's high throne the same sweet voice is heard: "I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely;" "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

From heaven to earth, and from earth back again to heaven, *His whole revelation of Himself was one great continued act of giving*; and we can truly say in the words of our hymn—

"The captive to release!
To God the lost to bring!
To teach the way of life and peace,
It is a Christlike thing!"

It is, then, I say, more Christlike to give than to receive.

III. In the third place, it is so, because it is at once *the sign and source of greater happiness!*

It is a sign, I say, of greater happiness on the part of the giving one. The truth is, that giving of all kinds, whether of property, prayer, or sympathy, flows out of a certain abundance of these things in the possession of the giver. Just as we read of the Macedonians, for example, that the abundance of their joy abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Can you, sir, give a guinea to your friend in need? Is not that a sign that your pocket is not empty?

Can you minister comfort to the sorrowing, and speak peace to the troubled heart? Is not that a sign that you yourself have peace and heavenly comfort?

Moreover this giving is not only a sign, but also a source of happiness.

I wonder whether there are those among

you that can echo the truth of that remark. Happy indeed are they who have known in their own experience something of Job's sweet state, when he said, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Why, sirs, I am sure his heart must have sung for joy even deeper still.

In a book which I was reading the other day, I lighted across a sentiment quite Divine. The writer was describing the pleasure with which a cottager's child, to whom he had shown some little kindness, used to watch for him day after day; and he told how the little fellow's face would be lighted up with bright smiles when he saw him coming. That writer in speaking of his own feelings, as he saw the delight of the little child in return for his small kindness, wrote this glorious line,—

"It is a joy to me to be a joy!"

Oh, noble sentiment! worthy of that being

who was made in the image and likeness of God!

And surely, brethren, we are *all* agreed that to be able thus to give is a source of pleasure. So the very world itself has stamped with its own true title the character of the man who is always *seeking to receive and never willing to give*; whose hands are ever grasping, and whose pockets never seem to fill.

What says the world of him? That he is a "miser;" and the very schoolboy will tell you that "*miser*" means miserable—wretched one!

Yes, he is miserable with it all, though waving plumes may herald his passage to the grave! Though the *Illustrated News* may tell that he died worth half a million sterling! Though a marble monument be raised above his narrow bed! He is miserable still, sirs! For on that monument methinks I see these words, "Sacred

to the memory of"—ah! of whom?—"of the man who heaped up riches, but could not tell who should gather them." "Sacred to the memory of—the man who ground down the widow, and cruelly neglected the orphan;" and is now gone to appear in the presence of that God who has pledged Himself to be a "Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow"!

That, my brethren, is the character of the man *who believes that it is more blessed to receive than to give*; and who would wish to be such an one?

No, no! "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" for, as I have said, it is a source of happiness.

Yea, and I will go further, and I maintain that it is a *source of wealth*.

It may sound strangely to many an one, but I am convinced that "he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and see, what he layeth out it shall be paid to him

again ;"—not only in the resurrection, but even here upon earth !

People may laugh, as I laughed when a child, at the quaint old couplet,—

“ There was a man, the people thought him mad,
The more he gave away, the more he had ! ”

But I have ceased to laugh, brethren, at that couplet now.

What is it but that principle implied in the words of the wisest of men : “ There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty ” ?

Look, my friends, the wide world over, and you will find that giving is more blessed than receiving, because it is at once a source of happiness and of wealth.

IV. One more reason, and I think I shall have sufficiently shown you that the truth of this text is established.

“ It is more blessed to give than to receive,” because to do so is *more like*

heaven; more like, I mean, to the peculiar characteristic of heaven.

In heaven the voice of prayer will not be heard. No telling of want, no crying for help; but the giving of praise unto the Father, and unto Him that sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever.

What shall we say then, dear hearers, to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ? Shall we not echo back the cry, "Yea, Lord Jesus, it is more blessed to give than to receive"?

V. Let me here say a word or two about the *giving*.

I will for the present mention only two kinds of giving,—the giving of our prayers, and the giving of our means.

Yes, there is the giving of our *prayers*. A kind of giving the more precious, because we can *all* give our prayers; and we can give our prayers *for all*.

How many a true child of God would

wish to give gold or silver to some worthy work; but they are sad at heart, because they have not gold, they have not silver to give.

To such an one I would say, Friend, thou hast a God that heareth prayer, and thou hast a tongue to offer prayer. Oh, give thy prayers, that the gold and the silver may be blessed in their use to the glory of God, and to the salvation of souls.

All, I repeat, can give their prayers, and they can give their prayers *for all*.

In prayer you can embrace the Queen upon her throne and the peasant in his cot; your dearest friend and your deadliest foe. In prayer you can plead for your brother unconverted at your side in Christian England here, and for the poor benighted negro on the banks of the Congo's stream.

Oh, prayer is a glorious privilege! We can all pray—and we can pray for all.

But, brethren, we are living in a

practical world; and while, therefore, we value prayer,—yes, the longer I live, the more I value prayer,—still *it is needful that we should give of our means as God may enable us to give.*

My dear friends and fellow-worshippers, is there any one here who has been wondering within himself as to what I am really seeking after to-day?

If there be, then let me at once sum up the whole object of my sermon's teaching to-day, and I simply say that I have sought to convince every member of this congregation that where there is a good and deserving cause, and where you have the means, then *to give is not only a duty which you dare not shirk, but it is absolutely a privilege which you ought to be proud of.*

May God enable you to realize this truth, and may Heaven's blessing rest upon the givers and the gifts, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.



VII.

CHRIST IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

“He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.”—*Luke* xix. 45, 46.

OF all the many mighty acts recorded of our Saviour in the Gospels, there is not one, I think, that sets forth His Divine power more strikingly than that mentioned in my text, where “He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought.”

At first sight, perhaps, this circumstance

may not strike you as being so very wonderful; but when we come to consider everything connected with it—when we see *one Man*, who was not only not supported or countenanced by any of the folks in authority, but was actually and openly despised and opposed by the chief rulers and magistrates of the city,—when, I say, we behold the Carpenter's Son from the far-off village of Nazareth, going in single-handed among an immense crowd, interrupting them in the midst of their traffic, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and doubtless scattering their coins in all directions, and compelling them, by His own unaided means, to remove both themselves and their merchandise from that their long and oft-frequented haunt; when we think of all this, what must we conclude, but that it was a display, yea a striking, bold display, of that selfsame sovereign and unbounded power which at

other times could still the waves, heal the sick, and raise the dead to life again?

It was, indeed, a great and grand proof that He who did it had God with him, for none could do the things that He did, except God were with Him.

Before I endeavour to point out some of the lessons that are to be learnt from this transaction, it were well, perhaps, that I should begin by explaining some of the particulars which are here brought into notice. It may at first sight appear as something strange, that buyers and sellers, and money-changers, that oxen and sheep and doves, should ever have been found in the Temple ; it may seem inexplicable that a glorious building, like that of the Jewish Temple, which had been consecrated with the prayers of kings, and hallowed by the immediate presence of the King of kings, should have been filled with what was so unseemly to man, so repulsive to God.

112 *Christ in His Father's House.*

Strange that the very tabernacle of the Most High, the place of all others wherein He had caused His Name to be placed there, should have been turned into a market-place for traders, a stall for cattle, a pen for sheep, and a cote for doves.

All this was strange—it was abominable; but mark now how it came about, and learn a solemn lesson in the tale.

You are doubtless aware that the Jews were enjoined by the Levitical law to come up to Jerusalem three times in every year, at the three great feasts of their nation; nor were they at these times to appear empty-handed before the Lord, but to bring with them their offerings and tithes, as well as their yearly poll, or tax, which was known as their redemption money.

When, however, in the course of time, the Jews were dispersed abroad into different parts of the world, oftentimes dwelling far away from Jerusalem, it was simply

impossible for some, and most inconvenient for others, to drive up animals for their sacrifice. For any such emergency, the All-wise God had made provision in the Law, as you will find, if you turn to the fourteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, the 24th and two following verses; for there we read, "If the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set His Name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt bestow thy money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for beasts, or for wine."

The consequence was, that for the convenience of such as came from a distance, and brought up money instead of their

offerings of different kinds, a market was established near the gates of the Temple, where any one might purchase, according to their means and inclination, an offering for the Lord. There was, however, a difficulty connected with the purchase of these sacrifices—for the money which these good people brought with them from their homes in other lands might not be current at Jerusalem. Therefore it was that money-changers, people who gained their livelihood by exchanging, at a certain discount, coins of any country, for those of the Roman mint, gained a footing there.

And now observe,—and this I wish you specially to bear in mind,—that *thus far all was right*. But in the course of time, the priests, either taking the matter into their own hands, or for the sake of the rent which these buyers and sellers were willing to pay for such a privilege, removed the stalls and shops, in short the whole market,

into the Temple itself, not actually under its roof, but into the outer court, the Court of the Gentiles, as it was called. Now this was the only place into which the proselytes of the gate, that is, those who without observing all the ceremonies of the Jewish religion worshipped the God of Israel, were admitted.

What was the result? Why, in defiance of every feeling of reverence, yea, in defiance of common decency, these poor people were obliged to perform their devotions in the midst of all the filth and noise of cattle; and what was worse still, surrounded by all the clamours and bustle and blasphemy which too commonly attend such a place of traffic.

Oh, things must indeed have come to a sad pass, when men could be found thus wantonly profaning the courts of the house of the Lord. Yea, it was sin, and sin of the darkest dye.

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But, remember what I have already said ; there was nothing wrong, *nothing sinful in the things themselves.* There was nothing wrong in buying or selling oxen, or sheep, or doves for sacrifice. There was nothing wrong in those persons changing the coins of the strangers, and giving in return the coin of the city.

Wherein, then, lay the sin ? How came it that a whip of small cords was laid across their backs? *Because that they did that in the very Temple of the Lord which it was only lawful for them to do without those sacred walls.*

Outside the building, and under due regulations, and carried on in a proper spirit, all was as it should be. God's worshippers were assisted, and God's service provided for ; but when once they introduced those things within the sacred precincts of His House, that moment it became their sin, and called for the chastisement of

the Son of God. Dearly beloved! there is a lesson for many, if not for all of us, here.

We may, we must learn here, how severe is the displeasure of the Lord against all who profane in any way by such conduct the house of worship. Twice did His anger burst forth. Upon this occasion—the first time that He entered the Temple after His baptism, and once again—the last time that He entered it before His crucifixion; on each of these visits “He drove out those who bought and sold therein.” And in doing this, by taking these sharp measures, He most assuredly warns us that, however hateful sin must ever be in the eyes of a sinless God, it is *doubly hateful and abominable when brought more immediately into His presence*, and committed in the very courts of His own house of prayer.

Such acts, indeed, as we read of in this passage, men are not and cannot be guilty

of in our days ; but if the buyer and the seller cannot bring cattle nor money tables into the Temple of their God, they can, nevertheless, ay and they do bring with them there, too often I fear, that which is beyond a doubt equally offensive in the sight of that God who knoweth the very secrets of our hearts—and this subject of offence is, *their thoughts about worldly concerns and earthly traffic.* Instead of considering the sacred place they are in, and the purposes for which alone they ought to have entered it, they may by their wandering worldly thoughts do insult to Him who dwells therein ; for instead of giving their minds to spiritual things, they may be *in thought* buying and selling, bargaining or making profit—working or idling. Oh, what a sight must that court of the Temple at Jerusalem have been for the Holy Jesus to witness ! The honour of His Father insulted, His worship hin-

dered, and His "house of prayer" turned into a "den of thieves." When His eye lighted upon it, no wonder, forsooth, that His righteous indignation should have risen to such a height! No wonder, indeed, that He so manifested the power of the God-head which dwelt bodily in Him, as to strike the wretched creatures with awe, and cause them to shrink away, like cowards, from His presence.

But does that self-same Saviour, who, while on earth, was eaten up by zeal of His Father's house, does He regard those who, by their worldly thoughts, defile that holy place now, as any better than the cattle-dealers and the money-changers of old? Not a whit better, my friends; not a whit better, I tell you. Oh, that men would think of these things, that they would seriously consider the awful majesty and presence of that God whom they insult! His *hand*, indeed, is not here now

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to drive them forth from the holy house into which they have crept, but His *eye*, with all its piercing power, is still upon them, and, rest assured, His anger burns against them as hot as ever.

Oh, how can they continue thus to profane His sanctuary and provoke His indignation against them! How can they ever expect or hope to be admitted there into His presence, or to have a place in that more glorious and triumphant Church above, into which "nothing that defileth" shall enter!

There is no earthly objection to your entertaining these thoughts of business in your shops, your offices, and in your houses; but that which is not only lawful, but even necessary and praiseworthy, in those places, *becomes unlawful and sinful when brought within these sacred walls.*

The business of these buyers and sellers was not only lawful, but necessary in itself.

There was a place outside the temple walls called the "sheep-market," expressly set apart for the purpose ; but not content with that, eager for gain, and regardless of God, they gradually brought their traffic on to holy ground, and insulted their God within His own house.

And—alas! that I should have to say so, but it is the truth, and therefore I am not afraid to say it,—there are many, too many, who are guilty of the same now. "Six days," says the commandment, "shalt thou work, and do all that thou hast to do." Yes, God has given you six days out of every seven, that you may think of your worldly concerns, and devote yourselves to your business. Diligence and needful attention to our worldly affairs is thus positively enjoined upon us as a duty ; but men are too apt to turn this duty into an occasion for sinning. They say, "Really I must give an odd hour now and again to

business 'matters *even on the Sunday.*'

Well, I do not preach (just now, at any rate) against this. I do not say but that there *may* arise certain circumstances—once in a year, perhaps—when some such attention is actually necessary even on a Sunday. But what I warn you against, beloved, is this: beware lest you begin with some such pretext as I have already mentioned, and then, from little to little, go on, until you devote your Sabbath to that which desecrates it.

By degrees the better feelings wear away, the trespass is committed oftener and more boldly. What was at first done only now and then comes to be practised as a matter of custom and right. More and more of the Sabbath is taken, holy ground is further and further trespassed upon, till in the end the Lord's right is set aside and trampled upon, without blush and without even the sense of shame.

The market itself, perhaps, is not attended ; but the business of the market is either prepared for, or looked back upon. The work of the week is all planned out in the mind. The house of prayer is not altogether neglected, but it is entered with a mind crowded with week-day thoughts and week-day business, and thus the Lord's honour is insulted, and the habitation of His holiness defiled.

This is a hard saying, brethren ; but not one among you will deny the painful truth thereof.

And here, perhaps, you will raise the objection that you really cannot help thinking of your business affairs even in church. Well, I grant you that Satan does ply us very hard sometimes with wandering and worldly thoughts during the services of our church, even in spite of all our earnest struggles against them. But can you honestly say, my friends, that you give your-

selves fair play in this matter? Is it fair to expect that you can bring the world and its business up to the very doors of the church, and then drop them and leave them behind, while you pass on into the house of prayer?

Is it reasonable, think ye, to expect that you can think about business, and talk about business or pleasure, perhaps, even up to the very porch, and on to the threshold, and then, without a second's notice, forget all that you have been thinking and talking about, at the very instant that you cross that threshold, and have entered in here?

You may expect it, but you will most surely never succeed in your expectations. Let Satan manage to cause you to think and talk about these things up to the gates of the temple, to the door of the Lord's house, and that will be enough; our own wicked and deceitful hearts will do the rest for him.

Dearly beloved, ask your own hearts

whether any among you be guilty of this sin, *for sin it most certainly is.* If you are free, then happy, thrice happy, are ye ; but if your own consciences convict you, and shout, " Guilty ! " in your ear, then let me entreat you to well consider your ways, for in reality, and in the sight of God, you are guilty of the like sin with those dealers and money-changers in the temple at Jerusalem. Consider, I beseech you, that He may suddenly come upon you as He did upon them, but in a far more awful manner. When He does come, it will not be, as we read of Him in the Gospel of St. John, with a scourge of small cords ; but His fan will be in His hand, and with it He will " throughly purge His floor." Yea, He will separate the chaff from the wheat, and banish the ungodly from His presence for ever.

Thus far I have treated these words of my text *in their literal sense* ; that is, I have spoken of the temple as a building of

stones, and the buyers and sellers who were defiling it by their practices. But there is another sense in which we may understand and apply these terms, and thus, by God's blessing, derive a further lesson from them.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, writes thus: "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Mark this: the Almighty made each of us as a building in which He might dwell, and in which He might be glorified. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

We have here a description of what we are, and of the purposes for which we were formed, too plain to be mistaken. To us then, as to His temple, we may be sure Christ often comes. He comes to see if

His temple is clean and undefiled, and prepared to render Him fitting service.

Friends, in what state does He find it? Is all within holy, and pure, and beautiful? Is there, as it were, a sacred fire ever burning there? Is the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, purged out, that you can keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth? Is this the happy state in which He would find each heart among you here? Or can it be that His temple is thronged only with worldly thoughts and carnal desires? Have the buyers and sellers and money-changers got for themselves an entrance there? Have the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, set up their ruinous work within?

Is the ground of the heart thus occupied and trodden down? If a better thought, a pious desire or two, are present, have they room to do as they would? or are they not

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rather, like the despised Gentile, or the proselyte of the gate, denied their proper place? Are not their voices drowned by the wild uproar around them? Are they not trampled down by the overwhelming and unholy legion which have forced their way in to vex and disturb them? Oh, beloved, if this be the case, what must the holy Jesus think of such a temple? How will that heavenly Eye be grieved to mark this sinful state! Yea, and how will His anger be kindled, until He destroy them out of the way!

Are there any here whose hearts are in this unhappy state? If so, then let me entreat thee, friend, not to wait till His indignation be poured out. Let your prayers be quicker than His wrath. Beseech Him to assist you in driving out all this evil, all that defileth. Though He drive them forth, as He did the buyers and sellers, with a *scourge*, yet be thankful. Though

He visit your transgression with the rod, and your iniquities with stripes, yet rejoice and be exceeding glad if these chastisements be made the means of cleansing your sin-polluted heart.

Go then to Him this day. Ask Him that He may "purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin," and restore thee as at the beginning.

Then, beloved, but not till then, will you be able to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Then shall you dwell in Him, and He in you. Then will the Holy Spirit strengthen you to serve Him with a pure heart, and to walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all your days. And, finally, when He shall destroy this earthly tabernacle, this temple made with hands, He will bring you into a building of God, a "house *not* made with hands, eternal in the heavens."



VIII.

THE LORD'S SONG.

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”—*Ps.* cxxxvii. 4.

A SCENE more sorrowful, and a cry more heart-breaking, cannot well be imagined. Here you have God’s own people, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, far away from their native country, strangers in a strange land; and there, by the waters of Babylon, they “sat down and wept.”

“Sat down and wept.” What thoughts do those words awake within our bosoms! As their echo dies away, we picture to ourselves a little child, footsore and tired, pur-

suing her weary way across the lonely waste. The little one has lost her path ; again she thinks she has it, and again she finds she is mistaken, till at last, tired and despairing, she " sat down and wept." Or, I can even fancy that now I see a stout and sturdy man of business before my mind. He goes forth in the morning with his wonted happy smile ; his business thrives, and all goes merry as a marriage bell. For well nigh forty years has that man risen early and late taken rest. For forty years he has laboured steadily and honestly to gain a livelihood. Heaven has blessed his labours, and now his heart is light and glad in the thought that, should he be called away from earth, he has provided for his wife and little ones, when he should be dead and gone.

This morning he went forth bright as ever, and in a few hours he returns ; but, oh, how changed ! His smile is gone, and in

its stead an ashy paleness marks his face. Years seem to have passed o'er him since he left the house at morn. Yes, there is a change, and not without a cause. The prince of the morning is a pauper now. The man who a few hours before enjoyed the height of luxury is now face to face with abject penury. The fruits of years of wearisome toil all gone in an hour! Himself, his wife, and little ones left homeless and penniless. 'Twas more than he, man though he be, could bear. What could he do? He "sat him down and wept."

But in the text you have as sad a picture as any I could paint. Here you have the captive Israelites, robbed of their honours, and stolen from their homes. By the waters of Babylon they sat them down and wept, to mingle their tears with the passing waves, tears which the thought of home and Zion drew from their eyes—the thought of Zion, the city of the great King; Zion, the hill

where their temple was built, and where oft in its courts they had seen the power and glory of Zion's God. They remembered her former glory, and sighed when, now it was gone; they remembered her present desolation, and still they loved the dust thereof. Yea, they wept when they "remembered Zion."

Their harps they hanged on the willows, beside the rippling stream—on the willows, whose drooping branches seemed to share their sorrow.

1. They did not hide their harps *out of sight*, as though they would bury all remembrance of former joys and present sorrows, but "hanged them" up in view, as a constant memento of their changed lot.

2. They did not *cast them away*, nor did they *break* them, as though they never more should need to use them; for still the star of hope would shoot its ray into their sorrowing hearts. They still believed the

time to favour Zion would soon come, when they would yet praise Him who was "the health of their countenance and their God."

Perhaps their harps were hung upon the willows *in testimony to their firm and religious determination* never to make those instruments of holy praise to God subservient to the profane and impious mirth of His and their enemies. "For they that carried them away captive required of them a song, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." "*How*" (oh, I can picture to my mind their bosoms heaving in sorrowful anger, while the tears of impotent reproach welled from out their eyes)—"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

Now, beloved, without any unnatural straining of the text, these words may well be regarded as *descriptive of the Christian's experience*, for where is the saint that must not feel and own himself to be "in a strange land"? Where is the child of God

whose spirit has never been so sad as to mourn in pensive thought and say, "How shall I sing the Lord's song in a strange land" ?

In applying these words to Christian experience, they truly represent the saints of God as "in a strange land." The child of God is born from above; his immortal spirit longs for infinity; its surroundings here are too mean, too paltry, to satisfy its noble and broad desires. In all enjoyments below, he marks so much of variety and disappointment, and bitterness, as constrain him to say, "I would not live here always"; "I will arise and depart, for this is not my rest"; "I am a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." He is in a *strange land*.

How often have we heard of our countrymen falling victims to a foreign, a strange clime. The food is strange, and the atmosphere strange. Even so with the Christian

here below. Earth yields him no suitable supplies; the husks of worldly goods can never satisfy the cravings of a soul. As are the supplies unsatisfying, so are the customs "strange" to the Christian pilgrim in the land of his bondage. Sad and sorrowing; dwelling in the midst of foes; without are fightings, and within are fears; he has to struggle with the corruption and unbelief of his own wicked heart. The roaring lion and the subtle serpent all allure him into the hidden snare. Often in this waste and howling wilderness he meets with dangers, difficulties, yea, even with death; often "he walks in darkness, and has no light," and "his soul is discouraged because of the way."

But though earth and hell conspire against him, he is not destitute of friends. His thoughts are ever of heaven, and his eye is gazing *there*. *There* dwell God, his Father, Christ, his Elder Brother, and the

Holy Ghost, his Sanctifier. *There* dwell his brethren and companions, "an innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect." Yea, *thence* he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who shall come again and receive him to Himself, that where the Master is, there the servant may be also.

Whether in prosperity or adversity, there is something ever to remind the Christian that he is in a strange land, for his sorrows are sent to wean him from earth, and his comforts to cheer him on his way to heaven.

Full oft, indeed, his heart is filled with heaviness, and his soul is not in tune for joy; full oft is his harp hanged upon the willow, and the wild winds moan through its broken strings. When he thinks of his burdens, his corruptions, his dangers, and discouragements, he is apt to sit down and weep, while his pent-up feelings burst the

barriers of the breaking heart with the despairing cry, "How, oh, how shall I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

My friends, I would show you this morning that the Christian can sing the Lord's song even in this strange land.

The "Lord's song" is never out of season, never out of place. It is His will that in everything we should give thanks. Even in his darkest moments and in his sharpest trials, the "Lord's song" will suit the Christian's lips. Come then, my friends, oh, come, let *us* sing unto the Lord in a strange land.

How, do you ask, shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? What! ask yourselves again, can you not *sing to Him a song of gratitude?*

I. Oh, sing unto the Lord, the *God of Providence*, which has fed you all your life long unto this day—the "Angel which redeemed you from all evil." Look back

to the years of your childhood, to the faces that then were dear. Where now are the friends of your youth? Where are your playmates gone? The grave has opened its gloomy jaws, and one by one they have gone to their home; but you are alive here this day. Others have been stripped of their earthly goods, and now have to depend upon friends, or even to beg their bread from door to door. You have all things richly to enjoy; hitherto the Lord has sustained you; mercies countless as the sands on the ocean shore has Heaven showered upon you. Then can you yet find heart to ask, "How shall we sing the Lord's song?" Sing unto the Lord a song of gratitude for all His benefits toward you.

Look to the *God of all grace*, who remembered you in your low and lost estate, because "His mercy endureth for ever!" He it was who gave His only begotten Son to suffer death, that by His death ye

might have life ; who, in love and pity to your souls, ransomed you from the pit ; who drew your wandering feet from the broad way that leadeth to destruction, and guided them carefully into the way of peace ! 'Twas the Lord who roused you from your death in trespasses and sins, who bade you rise and live, to seek a better portion in the skies. What ! will ye still be silent ? Will your tongues even yet refuse to sing ? " Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever ! "

How 'shall we sing the Lord's song ? Why, by raising this day our grateful " Ebenezer " here, and on it be inscribed, " Hitherto hath the Lord sustained us " ! Then " bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless His holy name. "

Thus you find that you can sing the Lord's song, even a song of grateful praise, in a strange land.

II. Again, you may sing the Lord's song in tones *of sorrow and of penitence*. When you whose years are many look to the past, and review the mercies of the Lord, think, I entreat you, what have been the returns which you have rendered! Has He dealt with you after your sins? Has He rewarded you according to your iniquities? Where He has given blessing, what have ye rendered but cursing? What a miserable repayment of all His loving-kindnesses! Can not *you* sing a song?—yea, and that a wailing cry of penitence, of sorrow and regret?

My fellow-Christians, how stands it with you? Think of your original state, when you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Think how long you resisted His calls; think how you went on adding iniquity to iniquity,

how you sinned against light and conscience, how you despised the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame! When ye think of all this sad, sad conduct in the past, can not *you* sing a song of penitence unto the Lord?

Yea, and when at last your stubborn hearts did yield to love Divine and sovereign power, how often since have they proved fickle and false! How have your souls cleaved unto the dust! How have you forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water! How have you clung to earth, as if it were your home, while ye have forgotten your heavenly inheritance! Come, come, my fellow-sinners! come and join in the plaintive, penitent cry of the psalmist, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Thy loving mercies blot out my

transgressions; for our trespasses have reached up unto the clouds"; "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression: and my sin is ever before me."

Thus you may sing a song of penitence unto the Lord in this strange land.

III. Christians should also sing a song of *resignation* to the Lord.

Nothing more becomes a child of God than submission to his Father's will. There is music passing sweet in the voice of calm, trustful resignation. What more beautiful than the song which the aged Eli sang as he sat by the wayside trembling! Methinks I see him there, his manly form now bent with years, his grey hair streaming on the breeze!, His eye, bedimmed with age, is lighted up with unwonted fire as he gazes into the darkness of approaching night. He looks

for the messenger ; he listens for the sound of steps that will bring to him tidings of his people's welfare. For this day is a battle fought between the children of Israel and the Philistine foe. How anxious is that old man's heart ! How quickly doth it beat when he thinks of his two sons, who are now in the midst of the bloody fray ! Hush ! hark ! a sound is heard upon the breeze. Ha ! the courier comes ! He comes nearer and nearer ! Here he is come, and "What tidings, friend ?" drops from the lips of the anxious inquirer. "What is there done, my son ?" Quick ! oh, tell me quickly. And the messenger answered and said, "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken." Weep, Eli, weep ; howl and lament over their evil lot.

“It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.” How sweetly fall those sounds! How heavenly is this song of resignation! “It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good!”

Carry your thoughts far away to the land of Uz. There dwelt a man whose name was Job; a man who possessed of thousands of sheep, of oxen, and of camels, so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East. A few days pass, and mark the wondrous change. His children all are dead: they perished in the house of feasting. His goods are all lost, destroyed by heaven, or stolen by the enemy. Yea, and he himself is laid upon a dunghill, with the thunder loudly pealing, and the lightning gleaming through the lowering sky; while beside him stands his wife, with her ill advised suggestion, “Curse God, and die, Job.” Listen to the pious answer: “Though He slay me, yet

will I trust in Him." What? shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Are there any, my friends, among you to-day whose cup is thus mixed with gall? Oh, sing unto the Lord in the strains of Job!

Whate'er be your lot, remember it is from your Father! Be resigned, be patient, under your trial. What you know not now you shall know hereafter. From Zion's flowery mount, when the world and its weariness are left behind, you shall look back on all the way by which the Lord hath brought you and your tongue will burst into songs of praise, "He hath done all things well!"

It is in distress that you find the value of religion. It is in the dark night of sorrow and of trouble that the Christian's

lamp doth show its brightest light. I ask you then, you who know what sorrow is, you who seem born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, I ask you this day to sing the Lord's song of gentle resignation in this strange land.

IV. *In a strange land.* These words remind me of the last thing I have to say That is, we should sing a song of *joyful anticipation*, rejoicing in the hope of the glory that is set before us. Though in a strange land, though sorely beset with enemies, encompassed with dangers, and oppressed by sorrows, we are going *home!* Yes, friends, we are going home! As I look around me, and see among you those who have long been treading the pathway of life, as I see the almond tree blossoming and them that look out of the windows beginning to fail, I would remind you, friends, that you are near *home*; you will soon be home! and we are following after.

“Each night we pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home.”

Then sing, my fellow-Christians, sing unto the Lord in *anticipation* of the glorious morn when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” We shall be no more in a “strange land,” but happy, happy, in our home! Oh, oft as I think of the trials that tempt me here, of the sorrows that must darken my path, when I think of the loved ones who are already gone home, when I think that there our harps shall never be hanged upon the willow trees, but every hand shall hold a harp, and every harp be tuned; when I think of the joy unspeakable and full of glory there, oh, how I long to leave this “strange land,” and to go home, and so be for ever with the Lord!

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Yes, I long, O God, how I long, to be there ; but while we are here, while we are left in this "*strange land*," let us look forward in joyful anticipation, for we are going *home* !

“Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry ;
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high !”

To which happy land may God bring us, for Jesu's sake ! Amen.



IX.

*INTELLIGENT WORSHIP.**

“What mean ye by this service?”—*Exod.* xii. 26.

MEN AND BRETHREN,—Every service, in order to be acceptable to Almighty God, must have *a meaning*; it must be an intelligent and intelligible act on the part of those engaged therein. This has ever been sought by the Church of England; and this was peculiarly the case with the religious services of the ancient people of God. There was, in fact, not only a meaning, but a deep significance underlying every type and ceremony of that chosen race.

* Preached at St. Peter's, Cornhill, before the Ninth Essex Rifle Volunteers.

In this passage from which I am about to address you to-day you find their leader and deliverer, Moses, seeking to impress upon them, in order that they, in turn, might impress upon their children, the meaning of one of the most solemn acts of their national worship: "What mean ye by this service?"

I. Let us, beloved, for a few minutes to-day enquire, for our own edification and for God's glory, what was the original meaning of that service alluded to here.

In order to ascertain and answer that question aright you must go back in the history of the world well-nigh three thousand five hundred years. You must visit what was then one of the greatest nations upon earth, governed by one of the Pharaohs, that old historical line of kings. For more than three hundred years the covenant people of God had dwelt in the land of Egypt; and ever since the day

when "another king arose who knew not Joseph," from that day up until the moment when they are brought before us in this chapter, the iron of the oppressor had entered into their souls. "The ploughers ploughed and made long furrows" upon their back, and the taskmasters had shamefully entreated them; until at last God, the God of Abraham, heard their cry and saw the affliction of His people. "He showed Himself unto Moses," and revealed Himself unto him who was to be the deliverer of His people, at the back of the mountain of Horeb. There He told him to go down into Egypt and demand that the people of God should go free. To the land of Egypt Moses came; and, in the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, he demanded that His people should go forth.

The history of the children of Israel I take to be thoroughly known. The strug-

gle between Pharaoh and his God is the old, old tale of the way the sinner struggles with his Maker: now promising anything and everything; now withdrawing that promise and hardening his heart. At last God spake unto Moses and said:—"At midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

Then it was, brethren, that the Lord

instituted the Passover ; instituted the "service" alluded to in my text. On that dreadful night, when He intended sending forth His destroying angel, He commanded that every family of the people of Israel, according to the number of the members of that family, should take a lamb, and kill it, and sprinkle the blood of that lamb upon the two side-posts and upon the lintel, the cross-posts, of the house in which they should be. "And," saith the Lord, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a

feast to the Lord throughout your generations ; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."

That then, beloved, was the meaning of this service of the Passover. *It was to point the children of Israel back to that fearful night in Egypt, when the blood of the lamb, sprinkled upon the posts of their doors, saved them from the hand of the destroying angel.* Yes, and it had a deeper meaning still ; it showed to them, as it shows to us who are gathered here to-day, that in the hour of God's avenging wrath they, and only they, are saved who have sought shelter beneath the blood of the Lamb of God ; who have by a living faith laid hold upon the Saviour ; "who have washed their robes," as you have been singing this day, and "made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Dearly beloved, it is indeed my solemn duty and my privilege this day to proclaim,

in no mistaken terms, that *the blood of Jesus, the blood of the One True Lamb of God, and only that blood, can save the sinner from his sin.* The blood of the Lamb of God can save, and does save, from sin's polluting power and from its damning guilt.

Do ye, brethren, members of this corps that are gathered here to-day, do ye believe that truth? Are ye prepared by your life and actions to endorse it, and show that ye do believe therein?

Alas! I fear there are but too many who are victims to a fatal fallacy; who believe that there is something womanish, something absolutely unmanly, in a *soldier* confessing the faith of Christ crucified before men. But, dear friends, I would remind you to-day within these sacred walls that to be a Christian and to confess yourselves Christians before men is the very highest type of manliness. Yea, I will venture to

add that some of the proudest names on England's scroll of fame have been soldiers whose pride it was to own themselves soldiers of the cross of Christ. Who has not heard of Sir Henry Havelock, Hedley Vicars, Sir Henry Lawrence, and scores of others whom, did time permit, I might mention here? These are names of men whose lives were one continued open fight beneath the banner of the cross. These are the names of men who gloried in the blood of Christ, and who, resting on the blood, and fortified by faith in that blood, fought like lions

“For England, Home, and Beauty.”

Thus would I, in the first place, have you to understand the meaning of this service ; *I would have you clearly understand that there is salvation only beneath the shelter of the blood of the Lamb.*

II. But of *you*, dear brethren, gathered here this day, I would again ask, “*What mean*

ye by this service?" Are you, members of this corps, gathered here simply because it is your duty to your officers who command you to come? Or are you here because it is a fine thing to march to church with the martial strains of fife and of drum, and amid the wondering gaze of hundreds and thousands of spectators? If for these reasons one single soldier is present to-day, I would solemnly say to such an one, "*In the sight of Almighty God your service is a meaningless abomination.*" But I cannot and will not believe that such is the case. I would rather take it that we are gathered within these walls to-day *because as officers and men you believe in the existence of an All-wise and an Almighty God, a God who governs everything in heaven and in earth.* This service, I take it, means that, while you would not neglect one single precaution against the dangers which may threaten the hearths and homes

of England ; that while you would, with, all care, train your men to perfection, keep your rifles clean and your bayonets bright ; you still believe that “ the race is not to the strong nor the battle to the mighty,” but that the bravery of England’s bravest sons could never win the day were not the God of England with them.

“ What mean ye by this service ? ” Is it not identical with that which is meant by one of the strangest but one of the noblest of our poets, who says :—

“ The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and
gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the
sea
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest, when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen ;
Like the leaves of the forest, when autumn hath
blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal ;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the
sword,
Has melted like snow *in the glance of the Lord.*"

Is it not, then, a right interpretation when I say that you are here to acknowledge *that victory comes only from the God of heaven and earth ?*

III. Once more I would ask, "What mean ye by this service ?" Is it not meant to be *a service of thanksgiving to Almighty God ?* O brethren, we are gathered here under no ordinary circumstances to-day. Europe (shall I not say, even, Europe *and Asia ?*) are being shaken by the tramp of hostile bands and the cannon's deafening roar whilst we, in safety and in peace, are worshipping here in the temple of our God ! This fact should give a deep solemnity to this day's parade ; it should deepen your sense of God's goodness, and rouse you to

a greater fervour and thanksgiving to God. Our joy must be indeed a chastened joy. We cannot rejoice "as they who divide the spoil"; we can only rejoice with fear and trembling to-day, for there rests a cloud of sorrow upon the horizon of our joy. We dare not indulge in reckless rejoicing or selfish mirth when we think of the bloody battle-fields of Bulgaria and the horrors of the Shipka Pass. We must feel sad when we think of the devastated fields, the weeping widow, and the orphan babe. When we think of these, though our joy must be a chastened joy, there must be a deeper pathos in the songs of thanksgiving that *we* have peace at home.

There was to me this morning, in the presence of this corps, and with the tidings of this dreadful war ringing in our ears—there was to me a strange and unwonted meaning in many of the passages of the dear old Litany of our Church. There are

times, you know, in the life of every one of us when *some* at least of those petitions fall coldly upon our ears. The "prisoners and the captives" convey no distinct idea to our minds; while even the "fatherless children and widows" have nothing to do with our circle, and so scarcely call for a moment's thought.

But to-day, dear brethren, surely it cannot have been so! These petitions to-day have a pathos and a power that is quite their own. "The prisoners and the captives" for whom we have been praying are prisoners who have been taken by thousands from their homes during the last few months. "The fatherless children and widows" are perhaps those who have been bereaved even within the week just past; and when we prayed this morning for "the desolate and the oppressed" I felt that we were praying for many whose hearts are bleeding still from a sense of their loss!

Surely, friends, when we think of these things, our hearts must be cold and dead if we do not say that our service here to-day is *a service of thanksgiving to Almighty God!*

“*For peaceful homes and healthful days,
For all the blessings earth displays,
We owe Thee thankfulness and praise,
Who givest all.*”

IV. And, lastly, my beloved hearers, shall we not say to those who ask of us the meaning of this service, shall we not say that it is *a service of prayer to Almighty God?* of *prayer that God will be pleased to deliver us from the horrors that must be attendant upon war?* It is worthy all your thoughts this day that for more than two hundred years the soil of England has never been stained with the blood of England's sons. We have had our wars, alas! but, thank God, they have not been within our borders. Still, though not within our

own borders but waged in other lands, the misery brought by those wars has been deeply felt at home! How many a mother still mourns the brave son who perished on the heights of Inkermann and of Alma! How many a heart still aches for the young life which was lost in the Malakoff or the Redan! When we think on the sorrows of those days we feel that ours is *a service of prayer* to God, our God, that He would give "to us and to all people" the blessings of peace! We ask it, brethren; we pray for it: not because we dread the issue of the fight; not because we believe, as some would have us believe, that the hearts of England's sons are no longer "hearts of oak"; not because we believe that the brave deeds of Alma and Balaclava can never be dared again! No; we know that the same brave blood flows in their veins as in the days when "Up, boys, and at them!" was the word, and their enemies

fled before them like straws before the wind on a winter's day! We doubt not for a moment the issues of the fight or the bravery of our men; but we know the misery, the sorrows of war; and, therefore, if any should say to you, "What mean ye by this service to-day?" tell them that you came here *to have your thoughts pointed to the saving blood of the Lamb of God: that you came here to acknowledge that your God governs all things in heaven and on earth: that you came here to thank God for the blessings of peace which we enjoy at home: and, finally, that you came here, knowing the hearts that must bleed and the sorrows that await if war be proclaimed, to pray that He would be pleased to give to all nations unity, peace and concord.*

God grant that this service may have this full meaning for all that are here to-day, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



X.

*THE GLORY OF GOD: THE OBJECT OF
LIFE.*

“Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God!”—*1 Cor.*
x. 31.

IT was once said that “Christianity had not succeeded because it had not a fair start.” If by a “fair start” the speaker would have us to understand a proud origin or a wealthy founder, then we may safely endorse the truth of his remark.

“All these things” in truth appeared to be against it.

Its Author was none other than the reputed son of a poor carpenter, who lived and laboured in the despised village of

Nazareth. Its earliest preachers and promoters were, for the most part, unlettered fishermen from the waters of Galilee. Its doctrines taught that the old things must pass away, and everything be made new; they taught the man, who from infancy had been led to regard certain things as filthy and unclean the unpalatable truth that "to the pure all things are pure."

And it was this last point which occupied the pen of the apostle when writing this chapter from which our text is taken.

The church at Corinth was now ill at ease. There were those within her pale who shrank with horror from such meats as had been offered to idols. Others, on the contrary, knowing that they themselves regarded not such meats in the light of things offered to idols, partook thereof without hesitation.

Thus was the house divided against itself, and in the most imminent danger of

falling. But at this juncture the apostle interposes his fatherly counsel; and what think you was the advice which he offered? Would he eat all such meats unhesitatingly, and regardless of the consciences of those around? Certainly not! Would he then debar all use of such meats offered to idols? Certainly not. He consulted the feelings and the consciences of both the one party and the other.

To the over sensitive Pharisee he would say: "Is the idol anything? or is that which is sacrificed to idols anything?" To the reckless Corinthian he would give this salutary counsel: "give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." For, granted that all things are lawful, still all things are not expedient. "All things may be lawful, and yet edify not." "Why," saith the apostle, "if meat offend my brother I will eat no meat while the world standeth."

In fact, it would appear that this noble man had ever maintained as the rule of his life the glorious principle of the text : “whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God !”

Beloved ! The question of meats needs no more a peacemaker ; Corinth and her parties are well-nigh both forgotten. But the Church of England is to-day divided against herself. It is not an enemy that causeth this division, but her own familiar friends. Daily and hourly the rent is being made worse ; nor will peace and unity ever be within her walls again till all her children shall have imbibed more of the spirit of our text. I ask not that either party should yield every point to the demand of its neighbour ! Rather, I would say, let not the weaker brother be too exacting ; and let not the stronger, he who feels himself equal to a higher flight, despise the tenderness of conscience that

marks his fellow. But, in all our words and actions, let us ever anxiously consider the great end of our being, even "the glory of God!"

"Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God!"

Now in dealing with this text I would impress upon you, with all earnestness, the necessity of having the glory of God in view in all things, for three reasons, each of which shall in turn occupy our attention!

I. We must seek His glory in whatsoever we do, because, in all that He does, *God Himself has ever an eye to His own glory.*

Unlike man, God never does anything without a distinct object in view, "the Lord hath made all things for Himself!" To this grand end we must refer all His operations. This object is written in the clearest of language upon all His works: "the heavens declare the glory of God

and the firmament showeth His handiwork." There is not a sand upon the ocean shore, there is not a blade of grass in the bright green fields, but bears its silent testimony to the glory of its Maker. Yea! of every being, and of every thing, the great Creator ever testifies this: "for My glory have I created it, formed it, and made it!" *all for His glory!* And not only hath He made all things for His glory, but He makes ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR HIS GLORY.

Dark as may appear His path at times and though doubting man may be tempted to ask, "will not the Judge of all the earth do right? is there not a God who will judge the earth?" Yes, there is such a God; but He hides the face of His throne, "He spreadeth a cloud over it." Still, be assured He will overrule it all, to *proclaim His glory among the nations, and to make His praise to be glorious.*" See you

trembling crowd, huddled together upon the banks of the Red Sea ; before them the gloomy wave ; on the right hand Pihahiroth ; on the left Baalzephon ; while close behind is heard the dismal tramp of Egypt's hostile host. Little, you might think, could there be in such a situation of His people, wherein God might glory ! Ah, where is *now* their God ? Is He asleep ? or is He gone upon a journey ? Another hour, and the thousands of Israel may be scattered as sheep having no shepherd ; another hour, and Pharaoh may tread their honour in the dust, and smile in scorn o'er the vaunted glory of their God. All this *may* be ! But mark their leader as he raises his rod before the host ! Stand still and see the *glory of God !* The rod descends ; the waters part ; and onward rush the favoured race ; onward too go Pharaoh and his host, into the bed of that treacherous sea, which soon shall wrap them in its watery shroud.

Hark now to the shout of victory! Far and wide doth the echo ring, and wake sweet music o'er the now peaceful waves. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed *gloriously*: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Thy right hand O Lord is become *glorious* in power. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, *glorious* in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Yes, and for all future ages this truth must ever stand: "I am the Lord, that is My name. My glory will I not give unto another, neither My praise to graven images." If then *the glory of God* be sufficiently noble a principle to be the object of all God's works, surely it were a principle high enough to govern us in all things. "*Do all to the glory of God.*"

II. Again, in the whole scheme of redemption, which our Saviour came down

to earth to fulfil, the glory of God was the great object in view.

Listen to the heavenly choir that wake the silence of the night at Bethlehem. "Glory to God in the highest" is the leading note of that song. But once before had that joyous band indulged in song on earth, when creation's work was done, when man was made in the image and likeness of God. Then the morning stars sang together, and the children of God shouted for joy! Man then reflected the glory of his Maker; but alas, this fairest of the works of creation was all too soon marred and spoiled, for man forgot his God, "*and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.*" No song of joy would the angels sing again; but instead was heard the sorrowing cry of the prophet, "Oh that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of

the daughter of my people." But there is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there. "To day is born in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Now the long silent voices raise their joyful cry again, "Glory to God in the highest." The glory of His Father was the subject of His every thought. "Let your light," was His lordly bidding, "so shine before men that they may *glorify* your Father which is in heaven." Behold Him there! He is eating His last supper; He is drinking for the last time of the fruit of the vine; He is going forth to do and die; He lifts up His gaze to heaven, while from His lips drops the earnest prayer, "Father, glorify Thy Son, that I may *glorify* thee. I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." Follow Him on to Calvary. See Him, the Friend of sinners, die. So calm, so gentle, so forgiving, that "when the centurion saw what

was done he *glorified* God!" Glory to God at His birth, and glory to God in His death. A living testimony to the glory of God was His life ; a setting forth of the glory of God were His miracles ; His death was a peace offering to that glory. Glory to God from the cradle at Bethlehem to the cross at Calvary, and glory to God from Calvary to the mystic cloud that received Him out of their sight."

Now if the glory of God was the ruling principle of the Master's life surely it cannot be unworthy of us. As then, God did all things for His own glory, and as Jesus did all things for the glory of God the Father, let us do all things to the glory of that same God.

III. But let us bring the question nearer home, and you will find that the glory of God is the only principle upon which man may act with happiness to self and safety to the world at large.

Every man has, he must have, some principle. You hear of the man who betrayed the confidence of a friend, the tradesman who swindled his creditors out of their right; and you say such a man could have no principle. Nay! but he had a principle; a man without a principle is an anomaly, a contradiction in terms. We all act upon some principle good or bad, worthy or unworthy! Now, the only good, only safe, principle to act upon in life is to *do all things to the glory of God*. Man is the mouthpiece of creation. *Once* let man forego this principle, and what would you adopt in its place? *Once* let him abandon "the glory of God" as the rule of life, and the alternative at once steps in; if he will not seek the glory of his God, rest assured he will seek *his own glory*. Let that be the case! Let every man "live, move, and have his being," only for his own glory; let him centre everything in

that insatiable gulf of self; let every man in every place care only for himself, his own gain, his own comforts, his own pleasure and gratification. Let every one carry to its full length the hellish proverb "every man for himself," and then let "might be right" and "violence law." What would be the result, what the consequence? Why, earth would become a perfect hell!

Selfishness! Behold in selfishness the principle that spoiled the harmony of heaven. What but selfishness that begat sin and waked rebellion in the peaceful courts on high!—the spirit which would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven!

Selfishness! Here you see the spirit kindled by man's foulest foe within our parents' breast, as he softly whispered, "ye shall be as gods." Ah, how did "*self*" rejoice to think upon the brilliant future, when they should be like Him who made them, knowing good and evil.

Selfishness! See this cursed feeling in the heartless answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He was the first to confess it; but, though Cain be dead, his selfish spirit still survives.

Selfishness! Would you see its baneful fruits? Then carry your thoughts to the snowy steppes of Russia, far away 'neath Moscow's burning walls. See exposed to the biting frosts of that northern clime the footsore, careworn soldier of France. Follow that once countless host on their homeward march mid pathless wilds, and across the frozen waves; see the gay Mameluke of other days, now stiff and cold in death, with the stars on high for his funeral torch and the snowy fleece his shroud. Who robbed that warrior of his life and laid that dead man there? What made the wife a widow and her infant babe an orphan? What sounded the charge at Waterloo, and stained those peaceful fields

in human gore ! What but the *selfishness* of one man,—of him who sought his own glory, though he reared it on the ruin of empires, and quenched his thirst for fame in the blood of his fellows ! Man, indeed, fiend I should say in human form !

Nay, but you will say, such a principle is indeed dangerous upon so grand a scale, and when brought to bear upon so great objects ; but it matters little in our humble sphere of life. Friend, “ whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. “ *Whether ye eat or drink.*” The same principle in the commonest habits of life. Men should eat to live ; but thousands seem to live to eat. We speak of the drunkard as none better, nay, worse, than the beast. But, in truth, methinks the gluttonous man is a more repulsive object than the winebibber. The drunkard is to be pitied, as he quaffs cup after

cup; the poison drowns his senses, and tempts him on to more. But no such excuse is to be found for those "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame." Ye should *eat to the glory of God.* How many are there among the hundreds here to-day, who ask a blessing upon their daily food? Oh! in common gratitude receive with thankfulness the food you eat, and so eat to the glory of God. But "whether ye eat or *drink,*" "*drink to the glory of God.*" Drink to quench your thirst, and not to satisfy the craving lust of drunkenness. Why, drunkenness is a direct insult to our Maker, it degrades that man beneath whom God placed all things. Oh, my young friends, yea, and aged too, beware of the cup. Read our daily papers, and trace our blackest crimes in the Newgate Calendar, and is not drunkenness a most fruitful source? Would you see the effect of drunkenness?

See that woman, in rags; no bonnet to cover her head; no shawl to shelter her babe; her face so pale! her eyes sunken! and yet there was a time when you might have seen that woman, as she entered her new home, a happy trusting wife. The chest with its well filled drawers stood there hard-by the door; then pictures neat adorned the cottage walls; comfort marked their dwelling then, and happy was the bride. But, look, the scene is changed! the drawers with all they held are gone! The walls are naked, and the fire is out! See, the curious neighbours are gathered round the door. Shrieks and cryings are heard from within. Push on, look in! Oh! can it, can it be? yes, there lies in a pool of blood the once happy wife; and over her, with locks dishevelled and wild unearthly gaze; with clenched fist and upraised hand, stands the man who, in other days, had stood beside her at the

altar. He glares with wild unearthly gaze, he lifts his palsied hand again, and *strikes* her. Yes, you who are men, would you believe it? *He* has struck her; he who before his God and that congregation had sworn to *love, honour, and cherish* her in sickness and in health. *He* has struck *her!* Struck the woman who, from love to him gave up a mother's love; he has struck *her*, who quitted the happy home of childhood to share a home with him! Ah! the dastardly coward—to strike a woman, and that woman his wife. Coward creature; he is less than a man. But, friends, pity him. The man is *drunk*.

Now if this be eating and drinking to the glory of God; then eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die. But it is not so! Let us then drink so much, and eat so much (only), as tends to our own good and to "the glory" of our God!

Surely then, when once we realize that

the glory of God is the one safe principle upon which society can exist, it ought to and must be the one great guiding principle of our life.

What object, in fact, save the glory of God, can be found worthy of man, worthy of that being who was made in the image and likeness of God?

Would you have the heir of immortality to live only for time? Would you have the destined inheritor of another and an eternal world to live only for the fashion of this world, that passeth away?

If so, then let it be! Let every man climb the giddy heights of earthly pride; let him woo and win all that may be won of this world's fame; let him mount to the topmost step of glory here! and what, after all, has he won for himself? What more than the pauper, whom nobody owns? What but a shroud, a coffin, and a grave? Alas:

“ The pride of beauty and the pomp of power,
All that honour, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour ;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Away then with the thought that man
should live for earth or the things of earth !
Welcome the wish, welcome the fervent
prayer, that “ whether we eat or drink, or
whatsoever we do, we may do all to the
glory of God ! ” Amen !



XI.

THE HEAVENLY GUIDE.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”—*Prov.* iii. 6.

THE preacher who takes these words as his text need not rack his brain for suitable divisions under which to consider his subject. They naturally divide themselves into two heads: namely, the *duty* and the *promise*. The duty enjoined is, “in all thy ways acknowledge Him”; and the promise follows, “He shall direct thy paths.”

You may easily perceive there is here a connection between the duty and the promise, and it is worthy of notice that

you rarely find a duty enjoined in the Bible separately and by itself; while on the other hand you will as rarely find a blessing promised separately and by itself. For instance: "call upon Me in the time of trouble"; and the promise attached is, "I will deliver thee." Again, "cast thy burden upon the Lord"; and what is the promise? "He shall sustain thee." Or, "commit thy works unto the Lord"; and the promise follows, "thy thoughts shall be established." In all these passages a duty is enjoined in connection with a blessing promised.

However, you must remember that the connection between the *duty* and the *promise* in those instances is quite different from the connection which exists between *sin* and its *punishment*. There the connection is one of merit or desert and it is *justice* that forms the connecting link; but here there is no such thing as desert, and

the connection is one of *grace* and not of *justice*. For instance: "the soul that sinneth it shall die," such is the voice of *justice*; but, "in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths"; there you have the voice of *sovereign grace*.

The Great and Mighty One that inhabiteth eternity commands that we should "in all our ways acknowledge Him"; and little thanks, for so we surely ought to do, and having done so may fairly add, "we are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which it was our duty to do." Hence the command or duty was perfectly fair, and might stand without any promise. But no, not so. Do this, and His promise is pledged to "direct thy paths." He urges the duty, and lays it upon our shoulders in the gentlest possible way.

I. Now that I have briefly pointed out the character of the connection between the

duty enforced and the *promise attached* in the text, we will in the first place consider the *reasonableness* of the duty enjoined upon us.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him.” Acknowledge Him! Acknowledge God! *Where* can you find a duty more reasonable than this of acknowledging God in all our ways? “He it is that made us, and not we ourselves.” “In Him we live and move, and have our being.” To Him we are responsible, and from Him we receive all we have. Then surely it is our reasonable duty to acknowledge Him!

This *acknowledging* of God is at the root of every act of Christian worship. Take away this out of your religion, and your religion itself will be gone. If you take up and read your Bibles without acknowledging Him, there is no religion there. If you come to church because your parents came here before you; if you go up to the sanc-

tuary once or twice on the sabbath because it is a relief to do so ; if you join in the prayers and raise your voice in chant and hymn merely because it is the proper thing to do so, and not because you wish thus to acknowledge God, then let me once and for ever tell you your *religion is vain!* Our religion, and our religious exercises, are only then worthy of the name, when they are *means* whereby we acknowledge God. He is the great centre point of religion ; all its parts spring from and return to Him ; and He should be the sole object of our regard. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

II. Mark how mindful He is of our abilities. All He asks is that we should "acknowledge" Him. He is too high, too rich, to seek for aught else at our hands ; and we are too poor to give Him aught beside. Surely we ought to acknowledge Him. This is the revenue claimed by the

King of heaven from His subjects here on earth; and he that refuses such service robs his God!

Not that it matters to Him in the least. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He of thine hand?" "If thou be wise," says Solomon, "thou shalt be wise for thyself; and if thou scornest thou alone shalt bear it." He that dwelleth in the heavens is far too high for either our pride or our scorn to have any effect upon Him, and hence all He requires is that we should acknowledge Him.

This service the angels gladly render; and this He requires from all His reasonable creatures. Beware, brethren, lest ye be found robbers of God!

Ah, but you say, I never professed to acknowledge Him. My, dear friends, let me tell you it is perfectly immaterial whether you professed or not. What ex-

cuse would it be, think you, were any of you to break Her Majesty's laws, and then by way of excuse to declare that you "never professed" to obey those laws? Why, you know full well that it is your part and duty to obey such laws; and therefore, profession or no profession, you will be held responsible if you break them. Just so with regard to this duty of acknowledging the Lord in all our ways; whether we profess to do so or not, we shall be held responsible if we fail in the fulfilment of that duty. A duty too it is which we all can perform: it requires no great wealth, no great position, no great talent, to acknowledge the Lord. Here you have a duty which all may, and all must, fulfil. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

III. Let me, in the next place, briefly remind you of some of the many ways in which you may acknowledge Him. In

order to fairly acknowledge God, you must *realize His omnipresence*. Acknowledge Him as ever present, whoever you may be, or wherever you may go, or in whatever circumstances you may be placed.

Think of the words of Hagar, when far away in the open desert, with only the thirsty sands around and the bright blue sky above her! These were the words that fell from her lips: "Thou, O God, seest me!" Ye young men and maidens, yea, and ye who are more advanced in years, I would to God that ye would take this as the motto, the ruling thought, of your life: "Thou, O God, seest me!" When the foul, the sickening oath is about to pollute your lips, think before you utter that oath, and remember, "Thou, O God, seest me!" When in some hour of temptation you are on the verge of sin, let me entreat you to realize this awful presence. Oh that all (ye, all, and es-

pecially we who are young, apt to talk thoughtlessly and apt to act foolishly, could realize, in all its awful force this solemn truth, "Thou, O God, seest me!" Ah, friend, what of that thought which passed through your mind on your pillow last night? You would blush, yea, deeply blush, were I to publish it here to-day. I cannot; but God knoweth your thoughts afar off. What of those shameful words which you uttered? You would not dare utter them in the hearing of your parents or your minister; but remember, there is not a word upon your lips but lo! He knoweth it altogether! Yes, there is not a spot, either in the light of heaven or in the darkness of hell, either in the cavern of the rock or in the ocean depth, where you may hide from Him. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I go from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art

there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me!" O God, teach us to realize more fully Thy awful presence ever with us; "Thou, O God, seest me!"

IV. Again, if you would rightly acknowledge Him you must acknowledge Him as the "Giver of every good and perfect gift." Methinks there cannot be any duty more agreeable to man, or more pleasing to God, than that of giving thanks. Among you all, the hundreds that are listening to me this morning, how many, nay how few, among you render unto the Lord the praises due unto His name! "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His name." Yes, be thankful unto Him indeed; there are

countless mercies we possess, but which we do not value until we have lost them. Ye young men and happy children, be thankful that you have kind parents ; ye will not know their value till you have lost them ! Ye men of business, be thankful that you can, in the midst of these difficult times, make both ends meet ; be thankful that you can keep want, grim fiend, from your doors :

“ Not more than others I deserve ;
Yet God hath given me more ;
For I have bread while others starve,
Or beg from door to door.”

And, with all, there are thousands of so called *little* mercies which we scarcely ever think of. Many, many is the time in the day, in which you open and close your eyelids ; there is mercy in every time you do so. It was but the other day that I chanced to read of a poor man who by an accident broke some tendon attached to

the lid of his eye, so that henceforth the lid would never open, except when raised by the finger. "Never," said he, "never did I think before that it was such a mercy to have the full use of my sight!" No, my friends, I dare say he did not; nor is he an exception. How many, alas, are there among us who are surrounded with these *little* blessings, and yet amid them all we never acknowledge the goodness of that God who gives them. Let us endeavour, I entreat you, for the future to acknowledge Him in all our ways with a feeling of deepest gratitude.

V. Again, you must acknowledge Him in all your trials. I said but a moment ago that many are our mercies; and now I must tell you that many are our trials. Universal is the doom of man that is born of a woman; "he is of few days and full of trouble." Yea, born to trouble, "as the sparks fly upward." Sorrow is our heritage.

Where is the soul that would deny that this earth is indeed "a vale of tears"? From the infant babe with its little trouble, to the weary traveller whose head is whitened with the snow of many a winter and his cheeks furrowed by many a cankering care, from sunny youth to sorrowful old age, we all have our troubles. Some indeed have a cup more mixed with gall than that of others; but we all have our allotted share. You see that man passing down the street; his face is covered with smiles, and his voice resounds with a joyous laugh. Perhaps you envy him; perhaps you murmur at your lot, and wish you could exchange with that man of merry countenance and merrier laugh. Friend, you need not envy him. Follow him to his home at night, and mark him there as he lays his head upon the pillow. Ah! where is the bright smile fled? That face is now filled

with a look of deepest anxious care. See him! listen! he has sunk into sleep. Where now is the loud laugh? It is gone, and instead he moans and sighs as he turns him restlessly in his bed. He is dreaming of his troubles, troubles which he could hide beneath a jovial laugh in the daytime and before the eyes of men; but now, in the stilly hours of night, and when other eyes are closed in sleep, the truth will out, his troubles will haunt him. Yes, he with all his merry voice and smiling face has troubles that the world around never suspects. "A smiling face hides many an aching heart." O beloved! where is the heart that does not ache? Have you ever found such an one? I have not. No! we all have tears to drink in this wilderness of earth; we all have our burdens and our trials. But, my Christian friends, if we wish to be worthy the name of Christians, we must "in all our ways,"

rugged and rough though they may be, still in all our ways we must acknowledge Him. Oh that we could more deeply imbibe the spirit of the aged Eli, "it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth best in His sight." Rest assured this will sweeten the bitterest draught of the waters of Marah, if you will but acknowledge Him, and realize that it is the Lord who holds the cup to your lips. What says the pious patriarch of the land of Uz: "shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" Oh happy, how much *happier*, should we be, if we could but acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all our sorrows, if we could but do as I saw a child do, some time ago.

Its mother would have her little one take a draught of bitter taste, and the little one readily took it; but how? not by looking at or just tasting the draught, and then turning away in disgust. Oh, no!

the little one scarcely looked at the cup or the draught therein, but it laid its little hand on its mother's hand that held the cup, and then looked up in its mother's smiling face, and drank that bitter draught to the very dregs. It felt that so long as it was its mother's hand that held the cup, and its mother's face smiling so sweetly upon her, there could be no harm in her drinking it, though it might be bitter to the taste. She felt that what her mother did was meant in kindness and for her good.

Even so, my sorrowing friends when we have the cup of affliction placed to our lips, let us imitate that little child; let us feel that it is the hand of our Father that holds the cup; let us try to forget the draught, and look up in His kind face. Yes, it *is* kind, for

“ Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

There are times when we may feel in-

clined to murmur, and murmur we shall unless we keep our eyes steadily fixed on "Him." Do not, I entreat you, hang your heads towards the ground; but *look up*, up to Him. Can ye not hear Him, as a bright smile mantles over the face, whispering, "Drink, poor child; drink it, though it be bitter. It is for thy good, and what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." In all your troubles *acknowledge Him*. Try and say with the psalmist, "I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, because Thou, Lord, doest this."

Thus much have I briefly said in consideration of the duty enjoined upon us in the former part of the text.

VI. Now I will just glance for a few minutes at the blessed *promise attached* thereto. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, *and He shall direct thy paths.*"

What a grand and consoling truth! The great Jehovah promises to guide His

creatures of dust and ashes! The Sinless stretches forth His hand to lead the sinner. Various were the ways in which our God directed the paths of those who "acknowledged Him" in olden times. With Adam and with Moses He would speak face to face, even as friend meets friend. At other times He would direct the young Samuel in dreams at night, when deep sleep falleth upon man. Again an angel, one of those ministers of flaming fire, would bear His directions; or perhaps the Urim and Thummim, which shone in mystic splendour on the highpriest's breastplate of yore, would unfold the will of the great Master's mind. Still the old things are passed away, and we can no longer expect to find our directions given by word of mouth, or by angel sent from heaven, or by the wondrous Urim and Thummim. These are all at an end; but still the grand old promise holds the same,

“He shall direct thy paths.” How shall He do so, my Christian friends? *By His Word*; by this book, the written revelation of the will of our God. Search the Scriptures, beloved, for these are they that testify of “Him.” Within this little volume you will find principles and precepts suited for every possible condition of life. His Word, if read and used aright, will ever prove a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your paths.

Would you know the spirit and frame in which you should appear in the house of God? The question is put by David in the fifteenth Psalm, “Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle, or who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?” Yea, and the directions are fully given there.

Ye young men! mingling as you do in the affairs of business, and immersed in cares and difficulties, would you learn *how* to present yourselves acceptably in the ,

eyes of your God? The question is put in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, and in the ninth verse; yea, and the answer is given there. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, *according to thy Word.*" Yea, follow the directions set before you there, and ye will never err. Think not, that it is enough to read your Bibles; you must do that which you read. A Bible read, but not obeyed, will only increase your damnation. Better for you that you never opened a Bible, than that, having opened it, you should disregard its teachings!

Men and brethren, you who have been trained from earliest childhood within sound of its teachings, if you neglect its precepts and despise its directions, then beware! this Word of God will rise up in the judgment with you, and will *condemn* you. How will you dare plead

ignorance of His will in that awful day, when many of you have learned that will by heart. Oh, silly souls! why will you die? Will you take the lamp in your hands, and still rush over the precipice? Why, if ye go to destruction from this our Bible-blessed land, then are ye without excuse, for ye are nearing the bottomless pit with your eyes open.

VII. Once more; and let me entreat you to mark what I say. He shall direct thy paths by the still small voice of *conscience*. Oh, the depths of the wisdom and goodness of God! How has He given us this ever present guide to direct our paths! Beware, my friends, how you smother this voice from above. One there is, of whom we are told that he stifled its warning cry, though it warned him the step he was about to take would bring upon his head a curse and not a blessing. Alas, poor Jacob! Look

at his after life ; cheated by his friend, deceived by his own children. Oh ! listen to his heartrending cry, "My grey hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave!" Ah, friend ! thou shouldest have listened to the heavenly voice that bade thee stop ! Why, surely I may say there are thousands, ay thousands to-day in the land of weeping and gnashing of teeth, because they refused to listen to this directing voice. Beloved ! if the voice of conscience bids you not advance in a certain path, as you value your happiness in eternity, fail not to obey its warning.

Thus I have shown that He directs our paths by His *Word*, by the voice of conscience, yea and in many ways which I cannot now explain.

But before I conclude I would just ask you to mark the last word in the text —*paths*. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy *paths*."

Have you ever realized this solemn truth, my fellow travellers to eternity, that we slowly but surely moving on? What is life? What, indeed? but the pathway from the cradle to the grave? The path that leads to heaven if He shall guide our steps; the path that without His directing hand must lead to hell.

“ Every beating pulse we tell
Leaves but the number less.”

“ Our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.”

“ Yet nightly pitch our moving tents
A day's march nearer home.”

Home! Oh, sound of deepest joy!
We are going home! But where will that home be? Your home in eternity will depend on your pathway through time, let God then direct your path, and your home is certain; the path is holiness, and the end everlasting life. Let any other rule or direct your path, and your

home will as certainly be the bottomless pit,—the land of weeping and gnashing of teeth. These then are the paths, and these the ends: choose you this morning in which ye will tread; and may the Lord direct your choice to that narrow gate and strait path that leadeth unto life. Yea, though few there be that find it, still may your names be found among the blessed few. His command is simple and His promise sure. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” May God help us all to do so, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.



XII.

FADING AS A LEAF.

“We all do fade as a leaf.”—*Isa.* lxiv. 6.

THE little leaf has its lessons! and, indeed, what has not? Turn where you will, and you may learn some solemn lesson or other.

Look at the ox or the ass, and find a lesson there! for “the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.”

“Consider the lilies, how they grow! They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

“Consider the ravens ; for they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have storehouse nor barn ; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls !” Yes, and down to the tiniest of His creatures the great Maker would have us learn some truth from all. “Go to the ant, thou slug-gard ! consider her ways, and be wise !”

But to come to the subject—the fading leaf—before us to-day, I might truly ask where could you find a more suitable spot, or a more suitable time, than the end of the month of October, and in the midst of the beautiful woods around you ? It would appear to me almost wicked to let the lessons of autumn pass without our trying, at any rate, to lay them to heart.

The first thing that meets our gaze in the morning, and the last sound that falls on our ears at night, are the sight and the sound of the fading, falling leaves. And, brethren, God would not have a leaf fall to

the ground without leaving its trace in its teaching behind ; and therefore He has by the mouth of His holy prophet said, "we all do fade as a leaf."

" See the leaves around us falling,
Dry and withered, to the ground ;
All to thoughtless mortals calling
In a sad and solemn sound ! "

I. Now it is worthy of note that the Holy Spirit here does *not compare the life of man to a tree, but only to "a leaf."* A tree, the oak for instance, rises to perfection by *slow degrees*, and *long* retains its beauty and its strength. For ages perhaps it defies the howlings of the blast, and at last, after long and repeated attacks, it only *slowly* falls to decay. Such is the history of *a tree*. But man, alas! cannot be compared to a tree ; he is only likened to "a leaf,"—a frail, delicate leaf.

Look at that leaf as you go to your homes to-day. Mark by what a slender tie

it retains its hold. How little force is required to bring it down to the ground, where it soon mingles with the earth, and is no more seen!

A leaf does not always *last the whole season*. It is exposed to so many dangers; it is often crushed while yet green; sometimes insects gnaw it off; sometimes the passing beasts devour it; sometimes winds may scatter it, or a whirlwind in one hour may lay all the branches bare.

And, brethren, "we all do fade as a leaf." What between accidents and disease, how few of the human race attain to old age! The Jews used to reckon up nine hundred and three diseases; but accidents are absolutely beyond our reckoning. A chill may bring us to the gates of death; a fire may wrap us and our home in ruins; the waves may swallow us up, so that we go down alive as it were into the pit. Indeed, when we consider how fearfully and wonderfully

we are made, yea and how fearfully and wonderfully we are placed, the wonder is not that we die so soon, but that we live so long!

And thus it is that many are only born to die. They open their eyes on this vale of tears, just utter a cry, shed a tear, and pass away. Others are spared a little longer; they grow in years, become lovely in form, and loveable in manner; they live just long enough to win our love, and then leave us behind, weeping and sad. Others are spared a little longer still; they marry and are given in marriage; they form partnerships in business, and enter on busy schemes; *but*, "as in a moment their thoughts perish, and the place that once knew them knows them no more!"

Sometimes the Great Master commissions the famine or the flood, pestilence or the sword, the firedamp or the fatal wave, and sends them forth to sweep and destroy.

These terrible visitations may be compared to those storms which desolate a whole forest at once, and cover the ground with leaves.

II. Now you should remember that *when a leaf fades and falls, it falls for ever, irrecoverably.* It is *not so with the tree*; "for there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant." But the leaf has no spring, the leaf can never be brought to life again.

And *man in this sense*, "fades like a leaf." "Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

No ! though hearts may break and cries of anguish fill the air ; though the widow and the fatherless weep, and though the strong man groans beneath his loss, yet, for man, when once death's hand has seized him, there is no bringing back to life again. " As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up *no more*. He shall return *no more* to his house, neither shall his place know him *any more*." Like the leaf he fades, and *fades for EVER here !*

III. But the *main thing* perhaps intended in this image *is the short continuance of life*. Let the leaf be blessed with the most favourable conditions ; let wind and weather deal gently with it ; let neither beast devour nor insect gnaw ; and, after all, how brief is the existence of a leaf !

And what is the life of man ? When Jacob was asked by Pharaoh how old he was, he answered : " the days of the years

of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage; and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." But if he fell short of the lengthened life of his ancestors, we come vastly short of his.

See there that old pilgrim. He has passed what many of us will never pass, even his "threescore years and ten." It seems a long time, seventy years; but ask *him* how life looks to him in review. He will tell you he spent all those years "as à tale that is told," "as a dream when one awaketh." Ask him how they passed away, and his answer is, "swifter than a weaver's shuttle." Ask him where are the companions of his childhood, his schoolmates and friends of his youth. Alas! one after another gone! One went home for his holidays, healthy and strong, but never

came back to his school again; a few weeks, and fever had done its work. Another, a father's pride, had grown into manhood, and was all that a father could wish; but alas! a chill, that secret source of so many deaths, seized the strong man, and like a leaf he withered and died! Another, the sweetest of all, not so much the father's pride as the mother's joy, grew up, loving and beloved by all, an ornament to the family tree; all went well awhile, until one day, alas, the leaf, the beautiful leaf, began to fade.

Ah! dear hearers, to my mind herein rests the sting of the image of my text, "we all do *fade* as a leaf."

Have you ever marked the fading of the leaf? Behold it there, so bright, so green, as late as yesterday; but look at it to-day! Look closely at it; see that little, so little, spot; surely it matters little that such a tiny spot be there! Hush!

Go there to-morrow, and the day after, and you will find how slowly but surely the spot grows larger; wider and wider the circle spreads, until in a few days our bright green leaf grows withered and seared, and fades, and falls to the ground.

My dear hearers, we *all* do fade like a leaf!

True! in some of us the signs of decay are more evident than in others; the hectic flush, the harassing cough, the failing memory, and many such like things may show to everybody, and to ourselves, that we are fading like a leaf; but let it never be forgotten, even by the strongest among us, that there are in all, yes in all of us, *the seeds of decay*.

True, with some the outward signs may not make themselves so painfully apparent; but I warn you *they are there!*

Oh may you lay the warning to heart!
Why, those of you, who have been, as

many count time, permitted to flourish for so many years, even you, must acknowledge that you feel you are fading day by day. You feel that your eye has not the keen glance that it used to have ; you feel that your tread has not the firmness it used to have ; you feel that your memory has not the hold that it used to have ; you feel, in fact, that indeed you are fading away !

IV. But there is one point in which I wish that we might all fade *more like the leaf* than we do. It is quite true that autumn, however much some of us may admire it, may still be to many suggestive of sadness ! At the same time I can scarcely conceive anything more beautiful than the varied tints of the fading leaves. There they hang, with their russet and crimson and gold ; day by day the rich tints deepen until the whole woodland smiles in its autumn glow.

Ah! surely the fading leaf has something very beautiful about it. And, my brethren, when we find a child of God slowly but surely sinking into rest with a smile on his face; when we see a young man who has made his peace with God daily growing weaker and weaker, and yet *so* happy; when we see a young girl just stepping into life, suddenly betray those signs that admit of no mistake, when she herself feels that she is going, that she must leave it all behind, and yet behold her there so happy, with such a bright peaceful smile: oh, there is something very beautiful in such a dying, such a fading away!

Dear hearers, will you not pray with me that your fading and mine, whenever and however it may come, shall be as beautiful as the fading of the autumn leaves! We all *do* fade as a leaf, we fade as finally as the leaf, we fade as quickly,

we fade as silently ; oh, let us fade as beautifully too !

V. This then is our state here, "we fade as a leaf"; but, brethren, remember that this is not our only state. There is another state, in another world, to which the present is but the threshold. The one is the way, the other is the end. The one is the seedtime, the other the harvest.

Oh that we could grasp the great truth that over everything here we may read "fading away," over everything there "for ever." It matters not *what!* whether it be the joys of home, or the pleasures of life; the one and the other are "fading away!"

Never until we realize this solemn truth shall we be able to value things here aright. We are so apt, when enjoying the happiness of our home or the comforts of life, to fancy that "to-morrow will be as to-day"; we are so apt to forget that

“the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away.”

Let this knowledge *moderate your attachments*. Make what use you fairly can of the leaf, but do not depend upon it, do not lean upon it for support. Remember that this leaf is but a *frail*, fading thing; one rude blast, and they fall by the thousand! Yes, and some of them need not the blast, they will fall before the slightest breath of wind!

Parents, you are proud of your children! I would not sadden you; but I *would* have you remember that, like the fading leaves, they may soon pass away.

Husbands! Remember how easily (as saith the prophet) the desire of your eyes may be taken away.

Wives! Remember that that loving noble prop, on which you are too inclined to lean, may fall, like a leaf, tomorrow.

Children! Remember that that father who bears all your cares to-day, that mother who watches over you as only a mother can to-day, father and mother may be gone to-morrow! To-day we have relations and friends, to-morrow we may be alone, like a sparrow on the house top.

And oh, bring home this truth to yourselves; YOU yourselves are fading as well as your comforts. *Reflect*, I pray, upon your frailty; not only at a funeral, or on a sick bed, or in old age; but reflect upon it every day.

Let me ask you in conclusion how do matters stand between you and that other, that eternal world? *There* all is unfading; the joys of heaven are joys for ever; the horrors of hell are horrors for ever!

The grand question should be, not "what shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but,

“what must I do to be saved?” Your chief concern should be, not for to-morrow, but for eternity! To-morrow may never come; eternity will.

Oh, think of that eternity, with all its *unfading* bliss! *There* is a Saviour who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!” *There* are riches which neither rust nor moth can corrupt, and which will never take to themselves wings and fly away! *There* is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” God grant that we may all be found meet for that inheritance, the inheritance of the saints in light!!! Amen.



XIII.

THE TEMPTED SAVIOUR.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.”—*St. Matthew* iv. 1.

WE are by nature, brethren, differently constituted; and I venture to suggest that it were well for us to remember this fact, in our judgment the one of the other.

Whether in the family, or in society, or in the church, the remembrance of this constitutional difference in character would, beyond all doubt, tend greatly to the promotion of peace and of happiness.

Take, for instance, this matter, in its

bearing upon Christian character ; and what is the result ?

Just this ! We find persons of equally earnest and equally consistent Christian dispositions, deriving peculiar pleasure and edification through contemplating the Saviour from entirely different points of view.

One soul, for instance, finds its highest happiness in thinking of Jesus as *a crucified Saviour*. Such an one dwells by the hour on the 53rd chapter of Isaiah : “ He was wounded for our transgressions ; He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and by His stripes we are healed.”

That soul's unceasing song would be :

“ Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend ;
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.”

Another soul may find its highest happi-

ness in forgetting awhile alike the cradle and the cross, and concentrating every thought upon the now ascended and *interceding* Saviour.

Such an one loves to look upon his Master, as He sits at His Father's right hand, "having led captivity captive, and henceforth receiving gifts for men." This soul revels in such a verse as "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and ever and again it is heard to sing :

" Jesus, our Priest, for ever lives
 To plead for us above ;
Jesus, our King, for ever gives
 The blessings of His love."

Others, however, there are,—and myself amid their number,—who, while resting to the full our hopes of heaven on the crucified Saviour, and glorying in an ascended, interceding Saviour, still find (oftentimes at least) our greatest comfort in contemplating Him as our *tempted* Saviour.

To many of us there is magic music in that passage; "we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

With us this is our favourite hymn :

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame ;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

It is then of this *tempted* Saviour that I wish to speak to-day ; and more especially would I point you to that great event in that great life—*the temptation*.

Everything connected with the temptation of our Lord is deeply instructive. Whether you consider the place, or the Person, or the period, or the purpose, it matters little ; each contributes to instruc-

tion and edification. May the Holy Spirit take, at this time, of the things of Christ, and show them to us!

I. Let me then at once point you to *the place* where the Saviour was tempted. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit *into the wilderness*, to be tempted of the Devil."

He was tempted in "*the wilderness*"; and His being there was no accidental occurrence, no mere chance. It was not that Jesus happened to be there, and Satan took advantage of His loneliness. Nay; He was taken there for the express purpose of being tempted; "*immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.*" And, if you ponder it well, there surely was a peculiar suitableness in that spot.

When God made man in His image, after His likeness, He placed him in the midst of the *garden* of Eden, that paradise furnished with all that a pure and sinless

being could require. But, alas, the tempter came, and Adam fell; yea, and in his fall he dragged down all creation with him. A blight passed over this beautiful earth, for even the ground was cursed for man's sake, thorns and thistles was it doomed to bring forth; so that the once blooming *garden* was changed into a howling *wilderness*.

Here then you must perceive how suitable was the place chosen for our Lord's temptation. The work that His Father had given Him to do was to redeem and to restore fallen man and the fallen creation; "for this was Christ manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." And there in that wilderness He would see around Him on every side the doleful emblems of the fall, and seeing these methinks He would feel as the tempter approached: "Oh, thou evil one, think not that thou canst tempt Me as thou

temptedst that first Adam in Eden! I see too clearly before My eyes the results of yielding to thee! Every thistle that I touch, every thorn that tears My flesh, bids Me drive thee hence!"

When you therefore consider the Master's mission upon earth, how that He came to cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose and to undo the consequences of Eden's fall, you must at once perceive how painfully suitable was the wilderness as *the place* where He should face the foe!

But there is, methinks, another and an awful lesson here.

I have said that *even Jesus did not voluntarily go into the way of temptation!* Pure and sinless though He was, yea and although He could truly say "the Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me," still He would not, un-called, rush to match His strength against that of the tempter.

Oh, my dear friends, how ought *we* then to avoid going unnecessarily into the way of temptation, we poor worms who, of ourselves, are not able to stand upright! How ought the man who has a craving for drink to try and avoid his boon companions and the public-house! How ought the man of hasty temper to try and avoid anything that he knows would be likely to irritate that temper! Let us not, I pray you, place ourselves wilfully and without necessity in the way of the tempter.

II. We will in the next place consider, if you please, the period at which our Blessed Lord was tempted. "*Then* was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil."

When was it that this took place? Why *immediately after that God publicly put especial honour on Him!* Immediately after His baptism; after that He had been,

in the hearing of all, acknowledged to be the Son of God, "Lo," a voice from heaven saying, "this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Now to us it may, at first sight, appear strange that Satan should choose an hour like this for his terrible attack upon the second Adam. But you may rest assured that the subtle fiend knew only too well the most favourable moment for assault.

He had once and again, in times gone by, fallen upon some child of God in such a moment as this, and had only too often conquered.

See there that "preacher of righteousness!" Mark how, day by day while building that ark, he had to face the taunt and jeer and gibe of an unbelieving host! Through all those years of scorn and insult the man of God stood firm, until in due time he entered into the ark with his little band. The door was shut, the

deluge came, and the unbelievers were swept to destruction. "And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry."

Then, at God's command, that good old man went forth; and, in the gratefulness of his heart, he "buildest an altar unto the Lord." I can fancy I see him there now! He turns first to the right hand, and then to the left; and wherever the eye rests, lo! nothing save the signs of desolation and of death! How must his heart have throbbled with gratitude to his Preserver! How did he, too, I fear, reason within himself: "Ah! God has indeed shown marvellous favour unto me! He has surely honoured me far above all mankind!"

Now, says Satan, is my time. Now,

when he is elated with the thought that God has selected him from among all others, and has shown him higher honour than all beside! Now is my opportunity! And truly he availed himself only too successfully of that opportunity, for there you see the man who for many a long year had stood unflinchingly the taunt and the jeer of the infidel world, now, in the hour of his triumph, lying senselessly drunk upon the ground!

Look, again, at the case of Lot! Year after year had this child of God vexed his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked! Throughout the years of his residence in Sodom he continued true to his God, and bore with patience the scornful rebuke of relative and friend; but when at length the cup of the iniquity of those cities was full, and God had determined to destroy them with brimstone and fire from heaven, He sent His angels to

deliver His child. They took him by the hand, yea and his dear ones too, and brought them out in safety from the midst of the overthrow!

How must that child of God have reasoned within himself at the wonderful love and peculiar favour shown unto him by his God! Others were destroyed; he was saved! The other cities were overturned; Zoar was preserved for him, and in answer to his prayer! How must he have felt the high honour which God had placed upon him then!

Now, says the evil one, is my time; this is my opportunity. Yea, and all too fatally did he use that opportunity! Behold him there! Behold him, who during those years of scorn and insult had bravely stood against the foe, in the hour of his safety and triumph falling a victim to the enemy's wiles.

Yea, and within mine own experience I

can call to mind a terrible illustration of this truth.

There was at college, in my day, a young man whose career ran side by side with mine. We matriculated at the same time, and at the same time took our degree. This young man was like unto him of whom we read in the Gospel, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." To his undying honour be it said he remembered that his mother was a widow, and that she looked to him then as she had once looked to his father. Most careful was he never to spend more than was needful, knowing that each shilling he spent left so much less in that widow's purse. Most indefatigable was he in his reading, knowing that it depended on his position in the class list whether he could secure his Fellowship and so secure a home for that widowed mother. Day after day would he sit over his books; and night

after night, when all else was shrouded in darkness, the flickering lamp in that student's room would tell of the midnight reader.

Throughout the whole of that university career never was known a more earnest nor a more frequent worshipper in the house of God. Regularly as the hour for Divine service came round, so regularly was that widow's son seen to enter that house of prayer.

Days and months and years rolled on, and at length the eventful day arrived, when—examinations passed, successfully passed—the tidings went rapidly round from mouth to mouth that the pattern son and student had nobly won his class, his First Class!

That evening I sought my friend, yea, and I found him; but where? in what condition? There, on the floor of his room, almost senselessly drunken, lay the

dutiful son, the pattern student, the frequent and earnest worshipper! Alas! alas! How truly had the tempter marked his time; *the hour of that young man's triumph was the hour of his fall!* And so has it ever and again proved true that the child of God, who in adversity held close to his Master, in the time of prosperity has fallen away.

Thus cunningly then did Satan seek to tempt our Lord in the hour of His high honour and triumph.

But let us look forward as well as backward, and what do you find? This, that our blessed Master was tempted *just before* He entered on His great public ministerial career. So long as He abode quietly at Nazareth we read not of any such fiendish attack; but the instant He comes forth publicly to begin His Father's work, that moment Satan rushes to the attack.

And so will it ever be. When your

heavenly Father summons you to work for Him, and is pleased to use you for some great and good purpose, be assured you may then anticipate hell's assault.

You wonder sometimes at this or that man of God having so much trouble ; fears within, fightings without. But if you carefully inquire you will assuredly find that he is working warmly and honestly for God, and *therefore* Satan assails him because he fears him.

Take the man whom the world commends and flatters, the man who like a dead fish goes quietly downward with the stream ; and ye will find that Satan but slightly tries that man ; and why ? Because the powers of darkness know full well that such an one will never storm the ramparts of hell, nor lead the van against the wicked one. Such an one is rarely tried of hell, because he is on the tempter's side, or if not so he at least is lukewarm,

and that, says Satan, will do just as well! Be prepared then, I pray you, for the foe's attack the moment you put your Christian harness on!

III. Let us in the next place look at the temptation itself, and the three different ways in which Satan tried to conquer.

(a) We read that Satan approached our Master after He had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, and when He was now an hungered. In this His hour of weakness and prostration the tempter first assailed Him. Mark how cunningly he suited the temptation to the frame of body; "if Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Oh the lurking, doubting sneer contained in that expression, "IF Thou be the Son of God." It was as though the evil one had said: "at Jordan but the other day Thou wouldest have us believe that from heaven's high throne the Father's

voice proclaimed Thee as His Son. That sonship I deny ; still Thou canst convince me of the truth of Thy claim, if it be a reality, for 'IF Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread !' ”

And why, we may ask, did not the Saviour do as He was bidden, and so dispel by that single act the insinuation that He was not the Son of God ?

The answer is plain. Had He done so upon that enemy's challenge, He would have shown a lack of faith in God by refusing to trust in the providence of that God. “Man,” says God, “shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

God had declared that “they that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good ” ; and says our blessed Lord, “I believe the words which My Father hath spoken, and am confident that al-

though there be no bread before Me at this moment still My God and My Father will supply all My wants."

If Jesus had listened to the tempter then, He would have fallen by the very sin which wrought the ruin of the first Adam —by the sin of unbelief! From Eden down to that wilderness, and thence even unto Britain, the sin of unbelief has slain, yea and is slaying, its thousands. God help us to say from the heart, "Lord, I do believe; help Thou mine unbelief"!

(b) The second assault of the tempter consisted in the evil one taking our Master up to Jerusalem and setting Him upon a pinnacle of the temple. This pinnacle is generally supposed to have been the roof of Solomon's porch, which lay on the south side of the building, and from which to the bottom of the valley below was about seven hundred feet.

Here on the top of this pinnacle the

fiend repeated his assault with the same insulting preface as before: "IF Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." As though he had said, "Thou art perfectly safe in doing so, for it is written in that very word that cometh out of the mouth of God, in that word for which Thou hast such wondrous respect, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone!'"

Mark the cruel cunning of the foe! He quotes Scripture in support of his foul temptation. How sadly can even the best blessings of Heaven be perverted in the hands of the wicked!

Jesus said unto him: "it is written again, 'thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God';" *i.e.* "thou shalt not throw thyself into danger voluntarily and without any necessity, and then appeal to God to save thee!"

It is true, my friends, that where in the ways of Providence we are placed in positions of danger God has there promised to protect us ; but if we rush uncalled into any such dangerous place, then *we tempt God*, and are guilty of grievous sin.

(c) Once again "the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them ; and saith unto Him, 'all these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

Ah, methinks I can easily see that even Satan is nearly at his wits' end, for finding that the insulting doubts which he had insinuated as to the Sonship of our blessed Lord could not tempt that Holy One to sin, he now in despair tells to the Son of God a barefaced falsehood, "all these things will I give Thee!" How could he give them? They were not his to give.

“Get thee hence, Satan,” was the withering reply, “for it is written : ‘thou shalt worship the Lord thy God ; and Him only shalt thou serve.’”

“Then the devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him” Whence, I would ask, came these ministering spirits ? Ah ! long, methinks, had they been watching the struggle ; long and anxiously had they marked the tempter and the Tempted. But when the strife was over, and the priceless victory won, then they rushed forward at once to minister to their heavenly Master’s needs !

Here we must stop. The main thing which I would have you learn from this history is just this, that He who to-day is at His Father’s right hand in glory was once a weary tempted pilgrim here.

Realize that the now glorified Jesus was once the tempted Jesus ! You may not at once see the importance of so regarding

Him ; but as you older grow, and as you more and more become acquainted with the slippery character of the path you have to tread, so you will the more appreciate the thought.

Poor child of Heaven ! There is many a struggle, many a trial, before you shall reach your journey's end. Yea, and in the hour of temptation in this wild wilderness below, what shall be your comfort ? Will it not be the knowledge, the assurance, that this selfsame path your Master trod, these very trials your Master bore, these selfsame powers of hell, assailed Him here ? But He conquered one and all, and, rising triumphant over death and hell, ascended up on high, where "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Behold Him there ! A conqueror now, and on a conqueror's throne ! Look up to Him, and take courage ; for to you is given this sure ground of confidence, that "in

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that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted"!



XIV.

"SHE DID NOT KNOW."

"For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness."
—*Hosea* ii. 8, 9.

THE words of my text were originally addressed to the Jews; but we must not get into the habit of thinking that they were worse than we are. They were fair specimens of human nature; and we have no reason to believe that we would have been better than they, had we been placed under the same dispensation; nay,

I fear we have proved ourselves quite as bad, even with far greater advantages.

Now I wish, my dear friends, this day, to call your attention to some solemn truths contained in this text.

I. In the first place, let us learn from this passage the true Source of all our blessings. "I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold."

Here we do not refer to our spiritual blessings. These it should be our principal concern to obtain, for these alone can satisfy the soul, or yield us a hope beyond the grave.

If our inquiry at present were concerning these, I trust we should think the apostle right in his acknowledgment when he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." But we now speak of temporal blessings, my dear friends. He

who is the Saviour of the soul has provided also for the body; and His bounty ministers not only to our support but to our delight; "He giveth us," says the apostle, "richly all things to enjoy;" "He daily," says David, "loadeth us with His benefits."

In these passages we see not only the abundance of our mercies but the Author of them.

I could add any number of testimonies from the sacred writings, to establish in your minds the conviction that God is the Giver of all you possess; and I would remark in particular that our Saviour has taught us to pray to God for them; "give us day by day our daily bread."

But I surely need not enlarge. There is one thing, however, concerning which I would warn you to beware. See that you never suffer instruments to keep you from God, the author and giver of all.

(1) There is, first, unconscious instrumentality. This takes in what we call nature. The sun, the air, the rain, the seasons, are all essential to the welfare of man. But these could do us no good without God; their use and their very being depend upon Him. "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good." "The day is His, the night also is His." "He hath made summer and winter." "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord. I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel."

(2) Again there are voluntary instruments. Thus our fellow creatures do us good in a thousand ways, and we are not to feel towards them as we would towards the fountain that refreshes us by the way or the bridge that carries us over the stream. For they act knowingly, in freely relieving

us ; and we are bound to feel grateful towards them, and a man that is ungrateful has no good principle that you can depend upon.

But here again God has higher and prior claims upon us ; for who placed those kind friends in our way ? who gave them the power to help us ? who inspired them with the will to help us ? and who gave us favour in their eyes ? Who, but God !

(3) And, once more, there is personal instrumentality. Few of the good things of this life are obtained without some exertions of our own. Indeed, if they were they would not be half so sweet. It is what a man gains by his own skill and diligence that is peculiarly precious :— "thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands." But although we are, in most cases, instrumental to our own comforts, we must beware of the sin of the Chaldæans, of whom it is said : "they take up all of them

with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag, because by them their portion is fat and their meat plentiful."

Brethren, however you may be prospered in life, remember I pray you who He is that gave you those talents, and that prudence, and that perseverance which have made you what you are! Who is it that placed you in a situation favourable to your efforts, and prospered those opportunities without which your attempts would have been vain? Where is the man who is not fully aware that his plans depended upon a multitude of events over which he had not the least control; any one of which might have rendered foolish that scheme which now appears so wise, and that undertaking fatal which now appears so prosperous? Where is the piety of the man who does not own

the agency of God in all his success, and say with the wise man of old, "the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow therewith"?

This was the grand lesson which Moses gave to the Israelites; and this, dear hearers, is the lesson I would leave in your memory to day. "Lest when thou hast eaten, and art full; and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; and thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten this wealth! But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."

II. And here we pass from the consideration of the Source of all our mercies to our guilt in the use of them. "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and

wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal."

Mark, here are two charges ; ignorance and abuse.

(1) Let us look at the ignorance this people displayed. "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and her gold."

God does much more good in this world than is ever known. He has done each of you countless acts of kindness, which you have never been aware of. From how many evils has He preserved you by day and night, abroad and at home, of which you never dreamt. Yea, and sometimes you have seen your danger, you saw yourself on the brink of destruction. The disease had brought you all but to the grave ; the fall had all but been fatal ; the accident had only just missed the child's life ; and the Lord in saving made bare His arm. And yet perhaps you were

only struck with the wonderfulness of the event, and only exclaimed, "What a lucky escape!" and forgot your gratitude as soon as the mercy was past.

For you must be clear as to the meaning of this expression, "to know." There are two kinds of knowledge: the one speculative, the other practical; the one a mere notion, the other sinking into the heart and influencing the life. The former is nothing without the latter; yet in this country most people possess the former kind of knowledge, but how few the latter!

Listen to the Scripture on this point. "He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

It is said of the sons of Eli the priest that they "were sons of Belial, and knew not the Lord." Now this cannot mean that men of their education and office, and sons too of so good a priest as Eli, were

unable to distinguish the God of Israel from the idol gods of the heathen ; but they did not act as men who were indeed acquainted with God.

Brethren, let us, I pray you, beware lest this charge should apply to us. Of course we know in one sense that all our earthly blessings come from God. But when we see the way in which many, very many, live, we are bound to say : "they know not that God gave them their corn, and wine, and oil, and that God multiplied their silver and their gold." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."

(2) But here is a second charge, abuse ! making a bad use of these blessings, "which they prepared for Baal." Instead of using them in the service and for the glory of God, they appropriated them to the service of idols. This is worse than

the former charge. Their ignorance was bad enough ; but this perversion of God's gifts was a crying shame.

How would you feel provoked if some one were to borrow money from you, and then go straightway and use that very money to injure you !

What would you have thought of David if, when Jonathan gave him his sword and his bow, he had turned round and slain Jonathan with his own weapons ! And yet, brethren, that is the way in which God is being treated by His creatures every day.

Listen to that blasphemer, to whom God has given breath and voice ! listen, I say, while the sickening oaths ring out upon the stilly night ! See that man to whom God has given riches : he wraps them up in a napkin, instead of using them in promoting the comfort and improvement of all around.

Oh ! the cruel, the wicked abuse of

God's mercies. Why! the very raiment which God has given to cover and to warm us, is it not too often made to minister to our pride? Genius and learning are valuable in themselves, and may be applied to the promotion of God's glory; yet how often are they employed to spread anarchy and infidelity! "The tongue," saith St. James, "wherewith bless we God, even the Father, often curses men who are made after the similitude of God!"

O dear friends! will you not join me in the sincere prayer that we may never pervert or abuse the gifts of God! And here observe how God takes away His gifts sometimes. "Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax."

God, my friends, withdraws our blessings as well as gives them! "I will return and take them away," says God. "I form the

light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil : I the Lord do all these things."

Job, of course, knew perfectly well who had robbed him of his substance, but still he said, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." We too often exclaim : "ah, it was that ungrateful servant ; it was that treacherous friend ; it was that malicious enemy !" But Eli would have said : "it is the Lord : let Him do what seemeth Him good." Our Lord knew that Peter would deny Him, Judas betray Him, Herod would insult Him, Pilate condemn Him, and the Jews crucify Him ; and still He said : "the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ?"

Again, you must learn from this passage how that God does not give up His property in any of His blessings when He bestows them upon us.

"I will take away My corn and My wine, and will recover My wool and My flax." They are His still ; we are but stewards, and all these things are only lent us for a given time and given purpose. When thereof God comes to take away some blessing from us, He does not rob us of anything ; He only takes back His own.

"If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine ;
I only yield Thee what is Thine ;
Thy will be done."

Once more, dear hearers, mark here how often God removes our blessings just when they seem most delightful and most necessary, when their loss is least expected and most keenly felt. "I will take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof."

Ah, how often do we find the father taken away when it appears to us that he was most wanted for his business ! See

the mother taken just when a large family appears specially to need a mother's care!

Dear hearers, how very like Jonah's gourd are our best blessings! The father; the mother; the good brave boy; the widow's stay!

But once more, and for the last time. Let us ponder well the purpose the Master has in view in thus robbing us of our blessings. It is not merely to chastise, not merely to punish. His conduct in the removal of our joys looks forward as well as backward. He is not only a righteous Governor, but also a tender Father! He punishes not for our destruction but edification; the very consequences of sin are made its cure; the very bereavement which He here declares shall come upon this people were to be the means, under His blessing, in bringing them nearer to Him. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not

find her paths ; and she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them ; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then shall she say : I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

Oh, the wonderful goodness of our God ! He only gives us husks in order to make us long the more for the food in our Father's home. Let this thought comfort you, my sorrow-stricken hearers. Your greatest trials may prove your greatest blessings. Many have seen this already, yea they see it so plainly that they are now praising God for providences which once tempted them to entertain very harsh thoughts of God. Go then, dear friends, to your homes this day with these few thoughts in your minds. The thought that all you are and all you have is of God ! That you must be careful not to be ignorant of this fact ! That you must

never abuse the gifts thus kindly made !
That He may, else, at any moment return
and take them away ! That He does not
surrender His claims to them, they are
only lent awhile to you ! That they may
be taken in the moment when most you
need them ! And oh, let this sweet
thought linger last and linger long : even
if He does take away your blessings He
will only do so in order to wean you from
earth and woo you to heaven ! Who then
that thus looks on his bereavement can
refuse to feel in his heart, yea and by
God's grace say with the lips :

“ Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee !
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be—
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee ! ”



XV.

STRONGER THAN THE STRONG.

“When a strong man armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.”—*St. Luke xi. 21, 22.*

IN the preceding verses you read that Jesus was “casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out the dumb spake, and the people wondered,” as well they might. But some of them said, Tush ! “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.”

• Strange, is it not, my friends, how ready and prone we are to heap unkind imputa-

tions upon each other ! and often we do so without either ground or reason, as did the Jews in the text, when they sneeringly declared that Christ cast out these devils by means of a compact with the prince of the devils.

Our Saviour, without condescending to deny the charge, simply showed its absurdity. "Why," said He, "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and a house divided against a house falleth " ; and upon the same principle, "if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because ye say that I cast out devils by Beelzebub." As though He had said : " You must confess at once that your explanation of the great change that has come over this man is simply untenable, since it is not likely that Satan would lend Me a helping hand in pulling down his own kingdom and stronghold. No, that will not explain the change.

But this will : Satan is like a strong man, armed ; and as such, when he succeeds in entering the heart of man that man is at peace, he has no prickings at conscience, no disturbing doubts, he is quite at peace. But if by any chance a stronger than even this strong man armed should be found, and if he should come upon him and overcome him, *then* "he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils."

Now Satan, my friends, is a mighty armed foe ; but Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, in heaven, earth or hell. He is stronger than the "strong man armed."

I. The first point we have to consider in this text is the description which it gives us of the unconverted heart. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace."

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Here you have, in a few words, a most graphic sketch of the unawakened sinner. The heart of man was from the beginning a *palace*. It was made, and intended to be, God's habitation. God dwelt with Adam ; It was His almighty presence in the soul that invested Adam with that paradise beauty which he had before the fall. The heart of man was then a princely palace, fitly adapted for so great and glorious a Guest. When the great Jehovah had completed His vast design, even this the masterpiece of creation, breathing the atmosphere of His holiness, shedding around the reflection of His glory, then we find that He pronounced him "very good." All the mind, and skill, and imagination of the man, were the willing subjects of his Maker ; all these costly gems that beautified that splendid palace, *all* reflected the pure, untarnished glory of the High and Holy One who dwelt within its shrine.

Just as the angels now wait upon their God, to fulfil His word ; just as those blessed spirits circle around His throne, waiting to catch His smile, and to behold some new phase of His ever-brightening glory : so man, in his primeval beauty, the beauty of innocence, moved as the mind of God moved, lived but to shadow forth His glory. His heart then had no other tenant, and asked for none other than his God. It was then the palace of Deity.

But what of the palace now ? Alas ! its glory is tarnished, its treasures are corrupted, and its splendour gone. Its rightful owner has been ejected, Satan has usurped His place ; and where God once reigned supreme, there now the devils dwell. All the mighty faculties, all the splendid powers, all the precious talents, the few lingering traces, which, like the ruins of some old castle, tell of a once vast and noble edifice, and which still remain

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witnesses of its grandeur: all these the usurper Satan now controls, to further his own ends and to strengthen his own kingdom.

Oh, men and brethren! what a degrading view of humanity! In what a mean, base, cowardly aspect does it place mankind! The very gifts which God gave us to promote His own glory have been surrendered to Satan, and we now often use them against our generous Giver. We have cast off God, and sought another prince to reign over us, the prince of the powers of darkness, the prince of this world! And though we have insulted our Lord, and turned the rightful Master out of doors, we still grasp our goods as if they were as much our own as ever. Yes, though God gave them to us for a special purpose, and though we have long since forsworn that purpose, yet we cling with bitter zeal to our possessions, and prostitute them to foul

ends, ends for which they were never intended. This is indeed a despicable view of humanity ; but shameful though it is, I pray to God that we may all have grace to see our shame, and then we may strive to remove it.

What do you say, what did we say, when in our papers we read of those fearful scenes of crime, those foulest records on the page of history, when India's sepoy's traced their every step 'mid crimes which left a deeper stain than jet? what did we say of the villains who turned our own guns upon our countrymen, and shot down their officers with the cartridges which those very officers had put into their pouches? What, again I repeat; did we think and say of them? No name was too harsh, no stigma too foul, no punishment too severe. We blew them from the guns, we called them villains, we branded them as traitors. Yes, and they were villains, they were traitors.

But are there no *moral* villains, no *spiritual* traitors, in the ranks of humanity ?

What shall we say of the blasphemer, of him to whom God has given lips to praise, but who uses those lips to curse Him ?

What shall we say of the sabbath breaker, of that man to whom God has given the sabbath for rest and preparation for heaven, but who uses that day of rest as a day of feasting and of a sure preparation for hell ?

What shall we say of the miser, to whom God has given much, but who buttons his pockets and locks his coffers, and leaves the widow and the fatherless to die of abject want ?

What shall we say of all who abuse the gifts that God has given them, and even turn them against Him ? Why, that they are villains, that they are spiritual traitors. Yes, shirk the question as we will, man,

fallen man, unconverted man, is, in the sight of God and in the sight of the glorious company that dwell around the throne of God, by nature a base, cowardly, degenerate traitor!

This is a painful, blushing truth; but it is a truth we *cannot*, and may God give us all grace to say we *would* not, deny.

Look, oh look, if only at the literature of the past and of the present ages. Do you not find that some of the noblest minds, some of the finest talents that earth ever witnessed, even they spent those very powers in sneering at their God and at His word! What of Byron? what of Hume? what of Voltaire?

So true, alas, it is that Satan has usurped the palace, and the goods are all his. They are held by the *strong man armed*.

II. My dear friends, methinks I need not linger long in order to convince you that Satan is a "*strong man*."

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Have none of you ever felt that you hated your sins, and that you would go and sin no more? You vowed you would not do so again, and yet you did do so before the close of the day. Why was this? Why did you perjure yourself? Because you could not help yourself; the "strong man" was stronger than you.

See that young man just rising from his bed, oh so sick, so giddy and ill. Last night he was *drunk*, and now in his remorse he solemnly swears he will never touch the cup again, no, never get drunk again. But before the week was over he did touch the cup again, and he was drunken again. Now why did that poor fellow perjure himself thus? Oh, "the strong man" was too strong for him.

Ah, my dear friends! I know from sad experience how strong this "old man" is! Have we not often wished to do some good turn, but found the painful fact that

the things which we would do, them the "strong man" would not allow us to do, and those things which we would not do them the "strong man" forced us to do. Alas! I feel you require no further proof to convince you that he is a *strong man*, too strong for us *in our own strength*.

III. But mark the concluding words of this clause of my text, "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace *his goods are at peace*." After what I have said, perhaps you will deem it strange that there should be peace in the midst of such evident misery; but doubtless there is a kind of peace in the palace of the unconverted soul, while Satan as a strong man keeps it.

It may be that peace which is the result of *recklessness* or *desperation*: no thought, no inquiry; one continuous, ceaseless whirl of sin. This is the outline of some men's lives; and such men's goods are at peace.

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But it is the peace of insensibility ; like a man falling headlong from some lofty precipice, as he whirls in his descent through the air, he is utterly unconscious of the awful crash with which he must alight on the basement below.

Or, again, it may be the peace of *ignorance*. This is another way in which the strong man enslaves his victims. They know nothing of the requirements of God's justice, the spirituality of His law, or the corruption of the human heart. Conversion is a strange thing to them ; judgment and eternity are words to them reserved for a dying bed, and thus through ignorance they are *at peace*.

But what a peace ! It seems to me like the peace that ushers in the lowering storm, or the stillness that presages death ! It seems like the hush that precedes the thunderbolt, or the dread silence just before the fight begins. Satan calls

it peace, but it is no peace. If any here are in such a state; may God Almighty awake you from that dangerous state; may He once and for ever break up your peace!

Anything, anything rather than that you should go on in that false, fatal peace, for "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are at peace, but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, then he taketh away all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils."

You see here the means by which the conversion of the sinner is brought about, "when a stronger than he cometh upon him." When Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, when the standard of the gospel was raised and the banner of the cross unfurled, then a struggle began. "I came not," says Christ, "to bring peace upon earth, but a sword." He meant

that where the gospel came with power sin could not reign in undisturbed peace. And so it is. You know that a sinner cannot seriously listen to the faithful, earnest preaching of God's word, and not tremble.

I believe it to be an impossibility for the gospel to be faithfully preached, and Satan's kingdom not to totter. Look at our missionaries, how they go forth to the darkest and most degraded parts of the earth, and proclaim the blessed gospel; not in man's wisdom, nor relying on human eloquence, but preaching it simply, plainly, affectionately, as St. Paul preached it to the jailer at Philippi; and Satan's peace perishes. Christ is stronger than the "strong man." There is a power in the living gospel which *hell itself* cannot withstand; sharper it is than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and marrow.

I have read of, yea I have *seen*, the hardened sinner, stern and dogged, heedless of reproofs, reckless of human laws, melting beneath the gospel's gracious strength. That hard countenance grew mild, and the silent tears trickled down those furrowed cheeks, as he heard, perhaps for the first time, of a Saviour's dying love—His promises of pardon and of perfect peace.

Brethren, it is this *alone* that can bear down the efforts of the "strong man." It is the voice of Christ alone that can make the strong man tremble and quake. If Christ will but take the matter in hand the victory is sure; He has but to speak, and it is done. The dead man springs to his feet, the diseased soul is made whole, the wounded spirit sings for joy.

IV. Now look at the effects of this change. "He taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted." In other words,

when Christ has once aroused the sinner and awakened him from his sleep of sin, He instantly strips him of his self-righteousness and shows him his nakedness and poverty : for "all our righteousness is as filthy rags ; we are as an unclean thing ; there is none righteous, no not one."

These must 'be your feelings, beloved, if you have heard and felt the voice of Christ. You must go to Him as poor, and blind, and naked. You must put off from you all the armour wherein you trusted, and trust in Christ alone. You must be clothed in His righteousness, you must lean on His grace. It is no partial work that Christ performs in the soul. Before the sinner can find favour with God he must renounce self altogether, his eyes must be opened, his heart humbled, and his spirit changed. With the teachableness of a little child he must approach the Saviour's throne, and the language of

his heart must be this: "not by works of righteousness which *we* have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

V. Once more, in addition to the taking away of all the armour wherein he trusted, the stronger than the strong man also "divideth the spoils."

"Divideth the spoils," what meaneth this? Why, that all the endowments of mind and of body, which *before* were made use of in the service of Satan, are now converted to Christ's service and employed for His glory. This is the sure result of a true conversion; where the heart is truly *fixed on Christ*, the life will surely be *spent for Christ*. None can tell or taste of the privilege of working for Christ, except those who have felt the power of this "stronger" than the "strong man." The stronger one wrestled with the strong man

in St. Paul, and brought him to his knees to cry for mercy. What then was his feeling? How would he sum up the happiness of the believer in this world? "To me to live is Christ." Ah, beloved, his was a glorious experience, before he could say that to him to live was Christ!

How few among us, alas! could say this of our life on earth! And yet if we are truly converted this must be true of us, that the spoils which Satan once held in his service are now devoted to the service of our God; the lips that once were only wont to curse are now engaged in prayer; the voice that once would lead the midnight brawl is highest now to swell the hymn of praise; the money that once was put into the miser's coffer is now thrown freely into the treasury of God; the sinner once has now by the grace of God become a saint.

Oh, how wonderful are the instances of

this heavenly power! It was this that conquered Saul of Tarsus. It was this that saved the dying thief, and snatched the brand from the very mouth of hell.

Men and brethren, what a lesson have we taught us here! When we think of the false and fatal peace which the wicked enjoy, it must fill every thinking mind with dread. How awful to live under the sway of the "strong man armed" a whole life long; to dream of peace all our lives, and at last to awake and "lift up our eyes in hell, being in torment." I believe this to be the fate of millions; Satan shuts their ears to the sounds of approaching judgment, and lulls them into a state as senseless as Lot's stricken wife. But—ah, that *but!*—when the last breath has expired, and the last sigh has been breathed on earth, then the "strong man armed" can do no more, and the forsaken soul

is dragged into the presence of One "stronger than he," and must answer to the Judge of quick and dead for the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

Brethren, there is no peace in hell, there "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." May God in mercy save us from that fate!

But let me not leave you with these sad thoughts.

VI. This text affords no little comfort to many of us.

Why, Christian friends, I feel that in some degree the experience of every Christian must be similar; and if so, then it must give you no little comfort to know that although our great enemy is strong still we have a Friend even stronger still, for "greater is He that is for us than they that be against us."

Is Satan like "a roaring lion, going

about seeking whom he may devour"? Fear not, my friend, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah is stronger than he.

Does Satan tempt us sadly at every turn? Fear not; for Christ will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but with the temptation will also provide a way for escape. O my tempted and tried friends, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

VII. Nor would I conclude without another word of comfort; just one thought, and I have done. Doubtless there are many pious souls in this church to-day, who are bitterly tried by the sinfulness and recklessness of some one near and dear to them: the wife perhaps grieving for her drunken husband, the mother sorrowing for her wayward child.

To all such I would earnestly say, Be of good cheer; do not despair. Your

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thoughtless one may be fast bound in the fetters of sin, in the bonds of this "strong man armed"; but it is not too late yet, it is not too late on this side of the grave. Who knows but that in His infinite mercy this noble Friend, this stronger than the strong man armed, may yet conquer the wayward spirit and tame the stubborn heart, so that he that was lost may yet be found, and he that was dead may yet be alive again.

Pray to God that it may be so; that He may take away all their armour wherein they trusted and divide the spoil. Oh, ye converted, ye released souls, pray, pray to God that the thoughtless sinners of every clime may yet be conquered, and like the grateful, cured leper, return and give glory to God!

